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SELECT POEMS
OF
TENNYSON

GEORGE AND HADOW

Questions

1) Illustrate from the poems, Tennyson's power of pictorial effect
2) Illustrate from poems, his power of making sound suit the sense.
3) Illustrate from poems, the melody of Tennyson's verse
4) " " " , Tennyson's power of indicating colour
5) How far can you gather from these poems, Tennyson's political & social opinions
6) What references are there in poems to incidents in Tennyson's own life.
7) Reproduce Tennyson's descriptions, where they are given, or otherwise comment on, Guinevere, Camelot, Shalott, Avilion.
8) State leading ideas in Ulysses & Lotus Eaters, so as to bring out the contrast between them.
9) "To live by law, acting the law we live by without fear and because right is right to follow right" Where in poems does Tennyson set out some views of duty
10) Quote & explain thought in the Deserted House & Crossing the "Bar".
11) Tell in your own words, the story of Oenone.
12) Trace out sequence of thought in poem "Freedom"
13) Give an account of what happened to Gareth at court of King Arthur.
14) Illustrate from any one of these poems, characteristics of Tennyson's diction.

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WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
FOR THE USE OF SCHOOLS

BY
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PREFACE.

MUCH of Tennyson's poetry is too abstruse in character for young readers to study with advantage, but some part of it is admirably suited for this purpose. We have attempted to select the poems which will in various ways most appeal to the young: and we have added, in the Introduction and Notes, such information as teachers are likely to find useful.

We have sought to make the selection as completely representative of Tennyson's poetry as was possible, consistently with our primary purpose and with the limits of space available. Hence we have thought it better greatly to curtail two of the Idylls, in order to find room for poems of another type. The story of *Gareth and Lynette* is told in a series of extracts describing the main incidents: and we close the Idyll of *The Holy Grail* at the final disappearance of the Grail and the return of Sir Percivale from the quest, omitting the subsequent narrative of the experiences of other knights. We have also left out a few short passages in order to avoid the introduction of incidents and personages that would have been unintelligible to readers who had not the whole series of the Idylls before them.

The poems are given in the chronological order of their publication, with three exceptions. The dedication *To the Queen* (No. I.) is naturally placed first. *Crossing the Bar* (No. XXX.) stands last, in accordance with Tennyson's express wish. *Gareth and Lynette* (No. XXI.) is given priority to the other two Idylls, which were in fact published earlier, because that is its proper place in the sequence of the story. It is worth remarking that the earliest poems (Nos. II., III., IV.) bear date sixty-two years before the latest (Nos. XXVIII. and XXIX.).

Two books are necessary for all who desire to know Tennyson's personality, and to form an estimate of the scope and character of his poetical work. The first is his *Life*, in two volumes, written by the present Lord Tennyson; the other is Mr. Stopford Brooke's *Tennyson, his art and relation to modern life*. Of both, as will be seen, we have made considerable use. Other works which may be profitably consulted by the reader are *Tennyson*, by Mr. Arthur Waugh; *Alfred, Lord Tennyson*, by Dr. R. F. Horton; *Tennyson*, by Sir Alfred Lyall; and Professor A. C. Bradley's excellent monograph on *In Memoriam*.

H. B. G.
W. H. H.

OXFORD, 1*st January*, 1903.

CONTENTS.

		PAGE
	INTRODUCTION, ...	ix
I.	TO THE QUEEN, ...	1
II.	RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS, .	2
III.	SONG, ...	7
IV.	THE DESERTED HOUSE, ...	8
V.	THE LADY OF SHALOTT, ...	9
VI.	ŒNONE, ...	14
VII.	THE LOTOS-EATERS, ...	21
VIII.	FREEDOM, ...	27
IX.	ULYSSES, ...	28
X.	THE DAY DREAM, ...	30
XI.	ST. AGNES' EVE, ...	37
XII.	THE LORD OF BURLEIGH, ...	38
XIII.	A FAREWELL, ...	41
XIV.	THE EAGLE, ...	41
XV.	BREAK, BREAK, BREAK, ...	42
XVI.	THE POET'S SONG, ...	42
XVII.	SONGS FROM 'THE PRINCESS,'	43
XVIII.	'CHRISTMASTIDE,' FROM 'IN MEMORIAM,' .	44

		PAGE
XIX.	Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington,	47
XX.	The Brook,	55
XXI.	Gareth and Lynette,	57
XXII.	The Holy Grail,	76
XXIII.	The Passing of Arthur,	89
XXIV.	'Cranmer's Speech,' from 'Queen Mary,'	101
XXV.	The Revenge,	103
XXVI.	The Voyage of Maeldune,	108
XXVII.	The Throstle,	115
XXVIII.	St. Telemachus,	115
XXIX.	Song from 'The Foresters,'	118
XXX.	Crossing the Bar,	119
	Notes,	120

INTRODUCTION.

They use me as a lesson-book at schools: and they will call me 'that horrible Tennyson.'

—*Lord Tennyson's Life*, Vol. I., p. 16.

It has been said that great poets are of two kinds: those who represent what is best in the thought of their own time; those who advance as pioneers, who make paths and clear obstacles for the generations to come. We may doubt whether any such division can be exactly maintained; literature does not lend itself to precise schemes of classification; but if we accept it as roughly true, we shall have no hesitation in placing Tennyson under the former head. In strength and in weakness, in range and in limitation, he is essentially the poet of Victorian England: he depicts its landscape, he describes its character, he deals by preference with the topics in which it is interested: his poetry, more than that of any among his contemporaries, is the outcome and expression of the intellectual progress of his age.

He was born on August 6, 1809, in Lincolnshire, the county of which he has painted the inland scenery in *The May Queen* and the coastland in *Locksley Hall*. His father was Rector of Somersby, a tiny village on the wold between Spilsby and Horncastle, set among

orchards and deep lanes and large spreading fields that carry the eye upward through unbroken expanse to the gray hillsides on the horizon. Two stanzas from *The Palace of Art* give us the very spirit of the place in its different moods. They are pictures on the tapestry of the Pleasure-house.

> And one, a full-fed river winding slow
> By herds upon an endless plain,
> The ragged rims of thunder brooding low,
> With shadow-streaks of rain.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> And one, an English home—gray twilight poured
> On dewy pastures, dewy trees,
> Softer than sleep—all things in order stored,
> A haunt of ancient Peace.

It was here that he spent all his early life, playing by the river-side, reading voluminously, thrilling his brothers and sisters with stories of romance, and writing as surely no child ever wrote before. Of course the style was copied from the hero of the moment, Thomson at eight, Pope at eleven; then, at twelve, an epic of six thousand lines in imitation of Scott; then, at fourteen, a blank-verse drama modelled on Byron; but, apart from this extraordinary facility—and he mastered Pope's couplet until he could improvise in it—we may add that their technical skill satisfied even the exacting taste of his later life. 'I have some of them still by me,' he said in 1890, 'and they seem to me in perfect metre.'[1]

From 1817 to 1820 he was at school at Louth. On his return he worked for eight years with his father, a classical scholar of considerable learning and great poetic

[1] See the example quoted in *Life*, Vol. I., pp. 23-32.

attainments, and in 1828 he entered, with his brother Charles, at Trinity College, Cambridge. His University career was remarkable, not so much from his winning the Prize Poem on *Timbuctoo*—the last reward and almost the last topic which we should readily associate with his name—as for the number and value of the friendships which he formed. He passed at once into intimate companionship with a generation perhaps the most brilliant that has ever been gathered within College walls: Spedding, Milnes, Trench, Brookfield, Alford, Arthur Hallam, Merivale, these were some of the men who filled his rooms and

> held debate, a band
> Of youthful friends, on mind and art,
> And labour and the changing mart,
> And all the framework of the land.

It was no small thing to take the lead of such a society, and to hold it with simple unaffected singleness of heart. Then as always his modesty shrank from every form of public display, and even when he gained his academic honour he asked Merivale to recite at the Senate-house the poem which he was too shy to deliver in person.

It was at Cambridge that he first began to speak in poetry with his own voice. Before going up he had published, conjointly with Charles Tennyson, a volume entitled *Poems by Two Brothers*, but these are mere echoes of his Byron-worship, attempts to re-light the ashes of a Revolutionary period that had died away. The volume of 1830 brings out of its treasure house things new as well as old. The songs, the love-poems are still of little account, but in *Mariana*, in the *Ode to Memory*, and in *Recollections of the Arabian Nights*, he

already indicates his power of pictorial description; in *The Poet* he gives a noble confession of the faith from which he never afterwards departed, and on every page he sounds a note, faint but unmistakable, of the matchless melody which sings in all his later verse.

In 1831 he left Cambridge, and in 1832 came the year of Reform, big with graver issues than England had known since the Napoleonic wars. There can be no doubt that Tennyson was profoundly affected by the awakening spirit of the time, and especially by a distrust of that growing individualism which the extreme left of the Reforming party then upheld as an ideal. The more serious tone which overspread his life was further deepened by personal bereavement. His father's death in 1831 was followed in 1833 by that of Arthur Hallam, the dearest and most intimate of his friends: there is little wonder that, amid private sorrow and public concern, his poetry should strike a note more earnest and more pathetic.

The next volumes appeared in 1833 and 1842 respectively. It is convenient to take them together, partly from a certain similarity of topic and treatment, partly because the later volume contained some important recensions of poems printed in the earlier. Among similarities we have first the classical poems—*Œnone* and *The Lotos-eaters* in the one, *Ulysses* in the other; second, the English idyllic poems—*The May Queen* and *The Miller's Daughter* balanced by *Dora*, *The Gardener's Daughter*, and *Audley Court*: and third, the symbolic poems, in which Tennyson first employed his eloquence for the direct inculcation of moral truth: as in *The Palace of Art* (1833) and *The Vision of Sin* (1842). Of

recensions the most important are those of *Œnone* and *The Palace of Art*. Thus, for example, the opening stanza of *Œnone*, as quoted in the present selection, is from the edition of 1842: in the edition of 1833 it runs as follows:

> There is a vale in Ida lovelier
> Than any in old Ionia, beautiful
> With emerald slopes of sunny sward, that lean
> Above the loud glenriver, which hath worn
> A path thro' steepdown granite walls below
> Mantled with flowering tendriltwine. In front
> The cedar-shadowy valleys open wide
> Far seen, high over all the Godbuilt wall
> And many a snowycolumned range divine
> Mounted with awful sculptures,—men and Gods
> The work of Gods—bright on the dark blue sky
> The windy citadel of Ilion
> Shone like the crown of Troas.

Here the picture is less coherent, the verse less melodious, the style overweighted with its load of heavy compounds, the whole workmanship incomparably poorer than that of the later form. Indeed more than one gift had been added to Tennyson during the nine years: a deeper insight, a larger view of human life, a statelier measure: the voice which sang *The Lady of Shalott* took a fuller tone in *Locksley Hall*, in the *Morte d'Arthur*, and in the wonderful lyric[1] which gave utterance to his sorrow for his dead friend.

In 1845 Tennyson received his first official recognition—a pension, from the civil list, of £200 a year. It is said that Sir Robert Peel, who was then Premier, hesitated between the poet and Sheridan Knowles, of neither of

[1] No. xv. in the present volume.

whom had he ever read a line, and that his decision was determined by Monckton Milnes, afterwards Lord Houghton, who converted him with a copy of *Ulysses*. A pendant to the story adds that Lord Houghton was stimulated to this missionary effort by Carlyle, who, ever since the volume of 1842, had become one of Tennyson's warmest and most cordial admirers. The two had little in common beyond their vivid imagination and their uncompromising love of truth: they differed almost as widely in opinion as they differed in style; but their grounds of resemblance were enough for a deep-based mutual respect, and for an intimacy which lasted through life. Among Tennyson's other friends of this time may be mentioned Rogers, Aubrey de Vere, Dickens, Thackeray, the Brownings, and above all Fitzgerald, a comrade for whose work he had a high regard, and to whose suggestions and criticisms he was often indebted.

His next two poems represent the two poles of his genius: *The Princess* (1847), with its homely setting, its gay romance, and its admirable songs; *In Memoriam* (1850), sweetest of English elegies, at the composition of which he had laboured for nearly seventeen years. Nowhere has he more openly unlocked his heart, nowhere has he shown us more of his inner life, of his thought on the great problems of humanity, love and sorrow, faith and doubt, regret and resignation. Critics from oversea have found it cold; the verse, they say, is too carefully polished, the feeling too carefully repressed; but to urge this is to misunderstand at once the reticence of the English temper and the essentially meditative and retrospective character of the poem itself. It was not, like

Adonais, a cry of pain uttered while the wound was yet fresh; it penetrates with long and earnest reflection the mystery of death and of the companionship which not even death can sever. It is the poetry of consolation: 'Next to the Bible,' said the Queen in her widowhood, '*In Memoriam* is my comfort.'

The same year added two events to the quiet record of his life. In June he was married to Miss Sellwood; in November he accepted the Laureateship, recently vacated by the death of Wordsworth. The first fruits of his new office were the stately dedication to the Queen, written in 1851, and the *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, which followed in the next year.[1] In 1855 he published *Maud*, at the time the most severely criticised of all his writings; and shortly afterwards began that series of epic romances in which he has retold the stories of the Arthurian cycle.

The subject was one which had long interested him, and in the treatment of which he had already made some preliminary essays. *The Lady of Shalott* (a version of the 'Lancelot and Elaine' story) was published in 1833; in 1842 followed two more Arthurian lyrics, *Sir Lancelot* and *Sir Galahad*, and the blank-verse poem on the *Morte d'Arthur*. Now he took up the tale again, and between 1856 and 1859 wrote the four Idylls which centre round the figures of Enid, Vivien, Elaine, and Guinevere. Ten years later he returned again to his theme: in 1870 he published *The Coming of Arthur*, *The Holy Grail*, *Pelleas and Ettarre*, and *The Passing of Arthur*; in 1872 he added *Gareth and Lynette*, and *The Last Tournament*; in 1875 he completed the series by

[1] Nos. I. and XIX. in the present volume.

writing *Balin and Balan*, which, however, remained until 1885 in manuscript. The only volume which appeared during the interval was that containing *Enoch Arden* (written in 1862, published 1864), a story in which, for once, his genius declines to a lower level.

Early in the seventies he turned his attention to the stage, and wrote, in close succession, his trilogy of historical dramas, *Queen Mary* (1875), *Harold* (1876), and *Becket* (1879), following them, by way of afterpiece, with a little romantic comedy, *The Falcon*, on a story taken from Boccaccio. But in entering the theatre he overstepped his natural bounds. He had little knowledge of stage-craft, little sympathy with the give-and-take of dramatic construction, and his style (to quote a paradox of Dumas) was too perfect for the colloquialism of the footlights. In spite of their abundant beauties neither these dramas nor those which succeeded them (*The Cup*, 1880, *The Promise of May*, 1882, *The Foresters*, 1892) gained any real hold of their audience, and not one of them has maintained the position which has so often been won by plays of far inferior genius.

For during these same years he gave ample proof that his gifts were still unimpaired. In 1880 came the magnificent volume of *Ballads and Poems* (containing, among others, *Rizpah*, *The Revenge*, *Lucknow*, and *The Voyage of Maeldune*); in 1885, 1889, and 1892 the three collections which bear the names respectively of *Tiresias*, *Demeter*, and *The Death of Œnone*. There was no lack of power in the hand which, for all its eighty years, could write *St. Telemachus* and *Akhbar's Dream*, the *Ode to Virgil*, and the deep serene melody of *Crossing the Bar*.

Of biography there is little to record. In 1873 he refused a Baronetcy, in 1883 he accepted a Peerage; but neither the offer refused nor the offer accepted did more than stir a ripple upon the surface of his life. His days were spent, with brief intervals of travel, in his home at Farringford: brightened by the visits of friends, chequered by the persistent intrusion of sight-seers, but standing aloof in almost unbroken tranquillity from the great course and current of the world. Though he followed the political movement with interest, he took little or no part in national events: it was through his art that he spoke when any rare occasion stirred him to public utterance; the occasion over, it was to his art that he returned. So the day wore on to evening, the shadows lengthened and faded, and on Oct. 6, 1892, the night fell and the work was over.

It is not proposed to attempt here any systematic criticism of Tennyson: the task is far too great for the limits of this essay; it has already been accomplished by abler hands. But, as preliminary to the larger treatises, it may be of use that we should briefly draw attention to one or two isolated points, and sketch, in outline necessarily imperfect, a few features of technique and conception which seem specially characteristic of his writing.

First: his power of pictorial effect. There is no English poet who can set before us more clearly and more concisely the essential features of a scene or landscape. Two remarkable instances have already been quoted from *The Palace of Art* (see p. x.). Not less wonderful are the following:

> And at their feet the crocus brake like fire;

or,

> Ring out wild bells to the wild sky,
> The flying cloud, the frosty light;

or this from *Ulysses*:

> Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
> Vext the dim sea;

or this, from *The Eagle*, a marvellous example of the effect wrought by two words:

> The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls.

He can use his skill to almost as good purpose in humorous or grotesque narration, such as the picture of Sir Noon-Sun:

> vizoring up a red
> And cipher face of rounded foolishness,

which is like a phrase of George Meredith, except that Meredith would have been more elliptic. And not only do these lines make us actually see the thing presented; they do it in a couple of strokes, an apt word, a well-chosen epithet, an illuminating simile, and the picture is made. That is the method of true art, and it is a method of which every page in Tennyson will furnish an illustration.

Second, and closely connected with the first, is his power of indicating colour. The first stanza of *St. Agnes' Eve* is like a snow-field, one pure expanse of dazzling whiteness: the description of the Island of Shalott is as gray as twilight; that of the Isle of Fruits in Maeldune is a riot of gorgeous hues. And observe, this owes hardly anything to the actual use of colour-words: it is far subtler in conception and workmanship; we are hardly conscious of the means—the rhythm, the picture, the choice of sounds—the effect rises and fills our eyes as

though it were some spontaneous growth of nature. Grant that this is a device easily misused, that in weaker hands it may degenerate into 'poems written with a paint-brush': it yields nothing but beauty in a master who can treat it with such true imagination and such unerring self-restraint.

Thirdly, he possesses, in a high degree, the dangerous gift of making the sound of his verse fit the sense. Dangerous, because this again is readily liable to misuse: it may descend into mere jingle and 'onomatopœia'; particularly if it is employed to describe actual sound in nature. The device, in short, gains in proportion as it is suggestive, rather than descriptive, and in proportion also to the difficulty of the problem which it attempts. For instance the famous couplet—

> The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
> And murmuring of innumerable bees—

is often quoted as if the two lines were of equal value. They are widely unequal: the first gives just the right degree of suggestion, and is further enriched by its one perfect epithet; the second (apart from its intrinsic melody) is not much better than the tricks of 'descriptive music.'[1] Or take another contrast: Excalibur, in *The Passing of Arthur*, is described as

> Flashing round and round and whirled in an arch,—

and we feel that the line is one for which the word

[1] Tennyson himself said that the couplet from 'Birds in the high hall garden,'

> Maud, Maud, Maud, Maud,
> They were crying and calling—

was intended to represent the cawing of rooks. But we can hardly take this seriously.

'clever' was invented: that it is a piece of ingenuity, and takes rank with a quip or a conceit. But in *Œnone* precisely the same rhythmic effect is used to far more beautiful purpose:

> And overhead the wandering ivy and vine,

where the metre festoons and clusters in curves not less graceful than those which it depicts.

Of the higher and nobler use of this gift Tennyson has many examples. Here is one, from *The Passing of Arthur*, noticeable for its double appeal:

> The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
> His feet on juts of slippery rock that rang
> Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels.

We see the black rock, we hear the clang of steel, and at just the right moment a flash of wet surface flies across the line and the picture is complete.

Not less remarkable is the coldness and ruggedness of the phrase:

> Scarr'd with a hundred wintry watercourses,

from the *Holy Grail*, or the heavy delaying steps of this (from *Ulysses*):

> The long day wanes: the slow moon climbs: the deep
> Moans round with many voices,

with its long monosyllables and its deliberately halting rhythm: or, most delicate and recondite of all, the single line of peace during the battle of *The Revenge*:

> And the sun went down, and the stars came out far over
> the summer sea.

There is nothing here which can be called a device, no conscious effort, no appearance of deliberation or selection: it seems but to say the simplest thing in the

simplest words, yet no melody of Beethoven, shining after a passion of storm, could give us the feeling of a more intimate and personal relief.

It is a harder task to analyse the charm and melody of his verse: here, more than anywhere, we must be content to offer a few scattered hints and suggestions. It would seem due partly to his choice of beautiful and sonorous words; of words, that is, which, in addition to their meaning, give actual pleasure by their sound, but still more to his subtlety of design in the disposition of tone and rhythm. For the melody of verse, like that of music, may largely be resolved into these two: the tone of singing notes, the contrast and organisation of rhythmic figures, only whereas music has but one kind of sound—for all the letters in its alphabet are vowels—language compensates for its narrow range by its distinction of vowel and consonant. Like all great melodists, Tennyson is fond of designing a phrase on one predominant note, often placed at the beginning of a line and strongly reinforced at the end. Here are three examples from *The Lotos-eaters*:

> Breathing like one that hath a weary dream,

and

> Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below;

and, a still stronger instance, where the vowel is more persistent,

> gentlier on the spirit lies
> Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes.

On the other hand, he can compose a vowel-melody which fills the entire gamut, like this from *The Passing of Arthur*:

> So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
> Among the mountains by the winter sea;

and between these extremes there fall a hundred varieties of delicate design. The pathos of the following stanza is surely enhanced by the chime and balance of its melodic beauty :

> And the stately ships go on
> To their haven under the hill ;
> But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
> And the sound of a voice that is still.

It is the same with his treatment of consonants. No man ever knew better the value of alliteration, and the still greater value of contrast and interchange. The following, for instance, is a perfectly wrought melody of consonantal sounds :

> A land of old upheaven from the abyss
> By fire, to sink into the abyss again,
> Where fragments of forgotten peoples dwelt ;

and here is another of the same kind, though in a different strain :

> The splendour falls on castle walls
> And snowy summits old in story ;
> The long light shakes across the lakes,
> And the wild cataract leaps in glory.

It would be no more possible to alter a word in either of these than to alter a note in one of the great tunes of Schubert or Mozart.

Not less remarkable is the variety of his rhythm. Beneath his hand the tiniest lyric stanza unfolds, the stiffest metre becomes flexible. Think for a moment of the rigid decasyllabic lines which represent the age of Pope, and turn for contrast to

> Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces ;

or,

> To the island-valley of Avilion;
> Where falls not hail or rain, or any snow,
> Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
> Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns
> And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea;

or, statelier than either:

> It may be that the gulfs will wash us down;
> It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
> And see the great Achilles whom we knew.

No doubt much of this may be due to artifice: it may fall below the spontaneity of Wordsworth or the untrained luxuriance of Keats; but surely artifice was never employed in a cause more noble or with a skill more consummate. And the same is true of his structural forms: the lyric perfection of *The Bugle Song*, the funeral march of the *Ode on Wellington*, the magnificent swing and cadence of *The Revenge*. Grant that it be, as Browning said of all poetry, 'Art in obedience to laws,' yet the obedience is that of a freeman and the laws are based on the very foundation of our human nature. So long as pure beauty has power to move, so long as it draws its materials from tone and rhythm and its principles from a wise organisation and control, so long will Tennyson take high rank among the great craftsmen of language.

It remains to indicate one or two points in which he has developed or enriched English thought. First among them may be noted his intense love of Nature, and in particular of our own island-scenery. He has not the deep spiritual insight of Wordsworth—we may contrast *Flower in the Crannied Wall* with the last

four lines of the *Ode on Immortality*—but no poet has ever looked upon the face of Nature with a keener vision. His eye is wonderfully clear and accurate:

> A million emeralds break from the ruby-budded lime,

in *Maud*; or again, in *The Brook*:

> I make the netted sunbeam dance
> Against my sandy shallows;

or again, in *The Poet's Song*:

> The wild hawk stood with the down on his beak
> And stared, with his foot on the prey.

He is, too, one of the very few men in our literature who has observed the sea: the sand-storm along the beach, when

> all the sea,
> Drove like a cataract, and all the sand
> Swept like a river;

the large, indolent calm, when

> the great waters break
> Whitening for half a league, and thin themselves
> Far over sands marbled with moon and cloud;

the reverberation of air and wave in a sea-cavern:

> ever and anon
> Dead claps of thunder from within the cliffs
> Heard through the living war.

This is something more than the gift of description: it means also that alertness, that sensitiveness to external impression, which we hardly find except in the great naturalists.

He has less power of dealing with men and women. He describes his own Lincolnshire country-folk with

close sympathy, and with the humour that is born of sympathy; outside their limit he is little able to depict characters and tempers that are different from his own. All his best men are of one pattern—noble, courteous, chivalrous, a little deficient in force and passion, yet bold in adventure and temperate in success: the pattern, in short, of just such an English gentleman as Tennyson himself. His women are hardly ever clearly seen—they are either mere sketches or pictures of which the features are incongruous.[1] Take, for example, *Gareth and Lynette*. The hero is admirable throughout, not a stroke could be bettered; the heroine is made up of three separate characters, and one of them speaks to our hearing with a somewhat masculine voice. That is one of the reasons why he fails in drama. He is too self-centred, too lyric, to give his *dramatis personæ* a free hand: he makes them say not what they mean, but what he means. 'I did not marry Esmond to Lady Castlewood,' said Thackeray, 'they did it themselves.' Tennyson could never have offered that plea.

He represents us, therefore, not so much by varying with our moods as by concentrating the noblest of English manhood into one supreme type. That a man should love truth, country, and freedom, that he should serve God and his lady, that he should reverence all womanhood and be tender to all weakness, that he should strike his blow for the right and reck nothing of reward,—these were the laws of his Round Table, these his principles of government. There are depths of feeling that he has not sounded, there are whole

[1] *Rizpah* is of course a magnificent exception, but it stands alone.

tracts of human life which he has not explored; within the boundaries of his own realm he has set up for ever the example of staunch and fearless loyalty to a high ideal.

Yet he was, in a very real sense, the child of his age as well as of his country. The time of his public career coincided with one of the most interesting periods in the history of our intellectual development: a period of political reform, of progress in educational methods, of the scientific advance headed by Darwin, Huxley, and Tyndall, of the religious awakening stimulated at one extreme by Newman, at the other by F. D. Maurice. England was full of new ideas and new controversies, her national character was maturing faster, perhaps, than in any preceding century, and it is therefore interesting to note in what manner and to what extent her thoughts were reflected in the mind of her most characteristic poet.

His political sympathies are well illustrated by the famous lyric in which he denounces 'the falsehood of extremes.' Himself of gentle birth, he had a natural sympathy with his class, yet he would restrict privilege and widen the bounds of citizenship. In early days he helped to carry aid to the Spanish Liberal refugees, who were planning a return by force to their country: his graver judgment could sternly rebuke violence and rebellion, and proclaim in its place the freedom which

> slowly broadens down
> From precedent to precedent.

Too wise to be led away by dreams of human equality, he yet wished that every man and every woman should have full equipment and full opportunity to use it: that

the career should be open to the talents, unchecked and unimpeded by any artificial limitations. With all sound measures for the amelioration of the poorer classes he was in obvious and ready sympathy, yet (as, for instance, in the Prologue to *The Princess*) there is always a touch of the aristocrat about his attitude: a movement of condescension, wholly unconscious, wholly without offence, but not like the frank comradeship of Wordsworth among the Cumberland shepherds. Again, his patriotism, though intense and genuine, is a little narrow: he seldom shows much concern with other nations or much understanding of their problems: to him a Paris revolution is 'the red fool-fury of the Seine,' and there it ends. One thinks instinctively of the typical English country-gentleman who is kind to his tenants, just to his neighbours, and loyal to his country: but who would be surprised if the villagers did not touch their hats, and who honestly divides mankind into Britons and foreigners.

His attitude towards the scientific progress of his day is more difficult to determine. Sometimes he speaks of it with a sort of impatience. 'Have these men,' asked Socrates, 'solved all the problems of human life, that they have leisure for abstract speculations?' and in like manner Tennyson asks,

> Is it well that while we range with Science, glorying in the time,
> City children soak and blacken soul and sense in city slime?

Sometimes, again, he seems to shrink back in dismay before the immensities that Science has revealed. 'What is our life,' he asks—

> What is it all but a trouble of ants in the gleam of a million million of suns?

Yet it would be unfair to estimate him by such passages as these alone. Like almost all poets he feels Science as something alien and remote; he cannot scale its heights or breathe in the rarity of its atmosphere: but for all that he can honour its work and approve its singleness of purpose. 'His poetry,' says Professor Dowden,[1] 'exhibits such imaginative sympathy as a poet who is not himself capable of scientific thought may have with Science; a delight in all that is nobly ordered, and a profound reverence for law.' Here we seem to have the conclusion in a single word. To Tennyson disorder was the worst of evils, and he gladly welcomed as an ally the power which was vindicating the supremacy of law throughout the entire field of Nature.

Not less firmly did he hold the conviction that law itself is of divine origin. His poetry is essentially religious in temper: not, indeed, with the vivid personal devotion of Newman, but with a faith in God and in goodness that shines like a clear and quiet flame. Doubt, with him, is never more than a passing phase; if he treats it as a settled habit of mind—in *Despair*, for instance, or in *The Promise of May*—he misinterprets its nature with all the naïveté of a child. In his darkest moments he can 'trust the larger hope,' and even such moments as these are rare. Grant that there is little definition, little dogma: that he expresses the spirit of Christianity rather than the letter of its creeds: it is a sufficient answer that he was a poet, not a theologian, and that to poetry all definite limitations are abhorrent. 'No mere Theist could have said the things which he

[1] *Studies in Literature*, p. 113.

has said in *In Memoriam*'[1]: and we may add that *In Memoriam* strikes a less certain note than such work of his later life as *The Human Cry* and *Crossing the Bar*.

On all these questions—social, scientific, religious—he is the poet of that *aurea mediocritas* to which, in spite of stress and conflict, our settled English character always returns. If he lack enthusiasm he is at any rate wholly free from bigotry and extravagance, he follows the progress of his age with keen insight and aids it with wise and temperate counsel. But when all is said and done it is as an artist that we reverence him, it is as an artist that he will live. Others have stepped forward more fearlessly as pioneers of new thought, as leaders of intellectual revolution, as discoverers of unknown continents. He remains with the general advance, keeping us in the path, checking undue haste, repressing rash endeavour, and meeting despondency with encouragement. If we are ever tempted to contrast him with the bolder spirits of the foremost guard we have but to hear his voice and we are silenced. No poet ever understood more fully the 'glory of words': none has sounded a music more rich, more varied, more pure in style, more beautiful in colour and tone. To study him is to learn the possibilities of our native speech: to love him is an artistic education.

[1] Stopford Brooke, *Tennyson*, p. 25.

I

TO THE QUEEN

1851

Revered, beloved—O you that hold
  A nobler office upon earth
  Than arms, or power of brain, or birth
Could give the warrior kings of old,

Victoria,—since your Royal grace
  To one of less desert allows
  This laurel greener from the brows
Of him that utter'd nothing base;

And should your greatness, and the care
  That yokes with empire, yield you time
  To make demand of modern rhyme
If aught of ancient worth be there;

Then—while a sweeter music wakes,
  And thro' wild March the throstle calls,
  Where all about your palace-walls
The sun-lit almond-blossom shakes—

Take, Madam, this poor book of song;
  For tho' the faults were thick as dust
  In vacant chambers, I could trust
Your kindness. May you rule us long,

And leave us rulers of your blood
As noble till the latest day!
May children of your children say,
'She wrought her people lasting good;

'Her court was pure; her life serene;
God gave her peace; her land reposed;
A thousand claims to reverence closed
In her as Mother, Wife, and Queen;

'And statesmen at her council met
Who knew the seasons when to take
Occasion by the hand, and make
The bounds of freedom wider yet

'By shaping some august decree,
Which kept her throne unshaken still,
Broad-based upon her people's will,
And compass'd by the inviolate sea.'

II

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

1830

When the breeze of a joyful dawn blew free
In the silken sail of infancy,
The tide of time flow'd back with me,
The forward-flowing tide of time;
And many a sheeny summer-morn,
Adown the Tigris I was borne,
By Bagdat's shrines of fretted gold,
High-walled gardens green and old;
True Mussulman was I and sworn,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Anight my shallop, rustling thro'
The low and bloomed foliage, drove
The fragrant, glistening deeps, and clove
The citron-shadows in the blue :
By garden porches on the brim,
The costly doors flung open wide,
Gold glittering thro' lamplight dim,
And broider'd sofas on each side :
In sooth it was a goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Often, where clear-stemm'd platans guard
The outlet, did I turn away
The boat-head down a broad canal
From the main river sluiced, where all
The sloping of the moon-lit sward
Was damask-work, and deep inlay
Of braided blooms unmown, which crept
Adown to where the water slept.
A goodly place, a goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

A motion from the river won
Ridged the smooth level, bearing on
My shallop thro' the star-strown calm,
Until another night in night
I enter'd, from the clearer light,
Imbower'd vaults of pillar'd palm,
Imprisoning sweets, which, as they clomb
Heavenward, were stay'd beneath the dome
Of hollow boughs.—A goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Still onward ; and the clear canal
Is rounded to as clear a lake.

From the green rivage many a fall
Of diamond rillets musical,
Thro' little crystal arches low
Down from the central fountain's flow
Fall'n silver-chiming, seemed to shake
The sparkling flints beneath the prow.
A goodly place, a goodly time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Above thro' many a bowery turn
A walk with vary-colour'd shells
Wander'd engrain'd. On either side
All round about the fragrant marge
From fluted vase, and brazen urn
In order, eastern flowers large,
Some dropping low their crimson bells
Half-closed, and others studded wide
With disks and tiars, fed the time
With odour in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Far off, and where the lemon grove
In closest coverture upsprung,
The living airs of middle night
Died round the bulbul as he sung;
Not he: but something which possess'd
The darkness of the world, delight,
Life, anguish, death, immortal love,
Ceasing not, mingled, unrepress'd,
Apart from place, withholding time,
But flattering the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Black the garden-bowers and grots
Slumber'd: the solemn palms were ranged
Above, unwoo'd of summer wind:
A sudden splendour from behind

Flush'd all the leaves with rich gold-green,
And, flowing rapidly between
Their interspaces, counterchanged
The level lake with diamond-plots
Of dark and bright. A lovely time,
For it was in the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Dark-blue the deep sphere overhead,
Distinct with vivid stars inlaid,
Grew darker from that under-flame :
So, leaping lightly from the boat,
With silver anchor left afloat,
In marvel whence that glory came
Upon me, as in sleep I sank
In cool soft turf upon the bank,
Entranced with that place and time,
So worthy of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Thence thro' the garden I was drawn—
A realm of pleasance, many a mound,
And many a shadow-chequer'd lawn
Full of the city's stilly sound,
And deep myrrh-thickets blowing round
The stately cedar, tamarisks,
Thick rosaries of scented thorn,
Tall orient shrubs, and obelisks
Graven with emblems of the time,
In honour of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

With dazed vision unawares
From the long alley's latticed shade
Emerged, I came upon the great
Pavilion of the Caliphat.
Right to the carven cedarn doors,
Flung inward over spangled floors,

Broad-based flights of marble stairs
Ran up with golden balustrade,
After the fashion of the time,
And humour of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

The fourscore windows all alight
As with the quintessence of flame,
A million tapers flaring bright
From twisted silvers look'd to shame
The hollow-vaulted dark, and stream'd
Upon the mooned domes aloof
In inmost Bagdat, till there seem'd
Hundreds of crescents on the roof
Of night new-risen, that marvellous time
To celebrate the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Then stole I up, and trancedly[3]
Gazed on the Persian girl alone,
Serene with argent-lidded eyes
Amorous, and lashes like to rays
Of darkness, and a brow of pearl
Tressed with redolent ebony,
In many a dark delicious curl,
Flowing beneath her rose-hued zone;
The sweetest lady of the time,
Well worthy of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.

Six columns, three on either side,
Pure silver, underpropt a rich
Throne of the massive ore, from which
Down-droop'd, in many a floating fold,
Engarlanded and diaper'd
With inwrought flowers, a cloth of gold.

Thereon, his deep eye laughter-stirr'd
With merriment of kingly pride,
Sole star of all that place and time,
I saw him—in his golden prime,
THE GOOD HAROUN ALRASCHID.

III

SONG

1830

I

A SPIRIT haunts the year's last hours
Dwelling amid these yellowing bowers:
To himself he talks;
For at eventide, listening earnestly,
At his work you may hear him sob and sigh
In the walks;
Earthward he boweth the heavy stalks
Of the mouldering flowers:
Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
Over its grave i' the earth so chilly;
Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

II

The air is damp, and hush'd, and close,
As a sick man's room when he taketh repose
An hour before death;
My very heart faints and my whole soul grieves
At the moist rich smell of the rotting leaves,
And the breath
Of the fading edges of box beneath,
And the year's last rose.
Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
Over its grave i' the earth so chilly;
Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
Heavily hangs the tiger-lily.

IV

THE DESERTED HOUSE

1830

I

Life and Thought have gone away
Side by side,
Leaving door and windows wide:
Careless tenants they!

II

All within is dark as night:
In the windows is no light;
And no murmur at the door,
So frequent on its hinge before.

III

Close the door, the shutters close,
Or thro' the windows we shall see
The nakedness and vacancy
Of the dark deserted house.

IV

Come away: no more of mirth
Is here or merry-making sound.
The house was builded of the earth,
And shall fall again to ground.

V

Come away: for Life and Thought
Here no longer dwell;
But in a city glorious—
A great and distant city—have bought
A mansion incorruptible.
Would they could have stayed with us!

V

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

1833

PART I

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky ;
And thro' the field the road runs by
To many-tower'd Camelot ;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs for ever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls, and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
The Lady of Shalott.

By the margin, willow-veil'd,
Slide the heavy barges trail'd
By slow horses ; and unhail'd
The shallop flitteth silken-sail'd
Skimming down to Camelot :
But who hath seen her wave her hand ?
Or at the casement seen her stand ?
Or is she known in all the land,
The Lady of Shalott ?

Only reapers, reaping early
In among the bearded barley,
Hear a song that echoes cheerly
From the river winding clearly,
Down to tower'd Camelot:
And by the moon the reaper weary,
Piling sheaves in uplands airy,
Listening, whispers "'Tis the fairy
Lady of Shalott."

PART II

THERE she weaves by night and day
A magic web with colours gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The Lady of Shalott.

And moving thro' a mirror clear
That hangs before her all the year,
Shadows of the world appear.
There she sees the highway near
Winding down to Camelot:
There the river eddy whirls,
And there the surly village-churls,
And the red cloaks of market girls,
Pass onward from Shalott.

Sometimes a troop of damsels glad,
An abbot on an ambling pad,
Sometimes a curly shepherd-lad,
Or long-hair'd page in crimson clad,
Goes by to tower'd Camelot;

And sometimes thro' the mirror blue
The knights come riding two and two:
She hath no loyal knight and true,
The Lady of Shalott.

But in her web she still delights
To weave the mirror's magic sights,
For often thro' the silent nights
A funeral, with plumes and lights
And music, went to Camelot:
Or when the moon was overhead,
Came two young lovers lately wed:
'I am half sick of shadows,' said
The Lady of Shalott.

PART III

A BOW-SHOT from her bower-eaves,
He rode between the barley-sheaves,
The sun came dazzling thro' the leaves,
And flamed upon the brazen greaves
Of bold Sir Lancelot.
A red-cross knight for ever kneel'd
To a lady in his shield,
That sparkled on the yellow field,
Beside remote Shalott.

The gemmy bridle glitter'd free,
Like to some branch of stars we see
Hung in the golden Galaxy.
The bridle bells rang merrily
As he rode down to Camelot:
And from his blazon'd baldric slung
A mighty silver bugle hung,
And as he rode his armour rung,
Beside remote Shalott.

All in the blue unclouded weather
Thick-jewell'd shone the saddle-leather,
The helmet and the helmet-feather
Burn'd like one burning flame together,
As he rode down to Camelot.
As often thro' the purple night,
Below the starry clusters bright,
Some bearded meteor, trailing light,
Moves over still Shalott.

His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;
From underneath his helmet flow'd
His coal-black curls as on he rode,
As he rode down to Camelot.
From the bank and from the river
He flash'd into the crystal mirror,
'Tirra lirra,' by the river
Sang Sir Lancelot.

She left the web, she left the loom,
She made three paces thro' the room,
She saw the water-lily bloom,
She saw the helmet and the plume,
She look'd down to Camelot.
Out flew the web and floated wide;
The mirror crack'd from side to side;
'The curse is come upon me,' cried
The Lady of Shalott.

PART IV

In the stormy east-wind straining,
The pale yellow woods were waning,
The broad stream in his banks complaining,
Heavily the low sky raining
Over tower'd Camelot;

Down she came and found a boat
Beneath a willow left afloat,
And round about the prow she wrote
The Lady of Shalott.

And down the river's dim expanse
Like some bold seer in a trance,
Seeing all his own mischance—
With a glassy countenance
Did she look to Camelot.
And at the closing of the day
She loosed the chain, and down she lay ;
The broad stream bore her far away,
The Lady of Shalott.

Lying, robed in snowy white
That loosely flew to left and right—
The leaves upon her falling light—
Thro' the noises of the night
She floated down to Camelot :
And as the boat-head wound along
The willowy hills and fields among,
They heard her singing her last song,
The Lady of Shalott.

Heard a carol, mournful, holy,
Chanted loudly, chanted lowly,
Till her blood was frozen slowly,
And her eyes were darken'd wholly,
Turn'd to tower'd Camelot.
For ere she reach'd upon the tide
The first house by the water-side,
Singing in her song she died,
The Lady of Shalott.

Under tower and balcony,
By garden-wall and gallery,

A gleaming shape she floated by,
Dead-pale between the houses high,
Silent into Camelot.
Out upon the wharfs they came,
Knight and burgher, lord and dame,
And round the prow they read her name,
The Lady of Shalott.

Who is this? and what is here?
And in the lighted palace near
Died the sound of royal cheer;
And they cross'd themselves for fear,
All the knights at Camelot:
But Lancelot mused a little space;
He said, 'She has a lovely face;
God in his mercy lend her grace,
The Lady of Shalott.'

VI

ŒNONE

1833

There lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
The swimming vapour slopes athwart the glen,
Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,
And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand
The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down
Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
The long brook falling thro' the clov'n ravine
In cataract after cataract to the sea.
Behind the valley topmost Gargarus
Stands up and takes the morning: but in front
The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal
Troas and Ilion's column'd citadel,

The crown of Troas. Hither came at noon
Mournful Œnone, wandering forlorn
Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.
Her cheek had lost the rose, and round her neck
Floated her hair or seem'd to float in rest.
She, leaning on a fragment twined with vine,
Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-shade
Sloped downward to her seat from the upper cliff.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
For now the noonday quiet holds the hill:
The grasshopper is silent in the grass:
The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
Rests like a shadow, and the winds are dead.
The purple flower droops: the golden bee
Is lily-cradled: I alone awake.
My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love,
My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,
And I am all aweary of my life.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Hear me, O Earth, hear me, O Hills, O Caves
That house the cold crown'd snake! O mountain brooks,
I am the daughter of a River-God,
Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all
My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls
Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed,
A cloud that gather'd shape: for it may be
That, while I speak of it, a little while
My heart may wander from its deeper woe.

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
I waited underneath the dawning hills,
Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy dark,

And dewy dark aloft the mountain pine :
Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris,
Leading a jet-black goat white-horn'd, white-hooved,
Came up from reedy Simois all alone.

'O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Far-off the torrent call'd me from the cleft :
Far up the solitary morning smote
The streaks of virgin snow. With down-dropt eyes
I sat alone : white-breasted like a star
Fronting the dawn he moved ; a leopard skin
Droop'd from his shoulder, but his sunny hair
Cluster'd about his temples like a God's :
And his cheek brighten'd as the foam-bow brightens
When the wind blows the foam, and all my heart
Went forth to embrace him coming ere he came.

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He smiled, and opening out his milk-white palm
Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold,
That smelt ambrosially, and while I look'd
And listen'd, the full-flowing river of speech
Came down upon my heart.
'"My own Œnone,
Beautiful-brow'd Œnone, my own soul,
Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind ingrav'n
'For the most fair,' would seem to award it thine,
As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt
The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace
Of movement, and the charm of married brows."

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He prest the blossom of his lips to mine,
And added "This was cast upon the board,
When all the full-faced presence of the Gods
Ranged in the halls of Peleus ; whereupon
Rose feud, with question unto whom 'twere due :

But light-foot Iris brought it yester-eve,
Delivering, that to me, by common voice
Elected umpire, Herè comes to-day,
Pallas and Aphroditè, claiming each
This meed of fairest. Thou, within the cave
Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,
Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard
Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of Gods."

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
It was the deep midnoon: one silvery cloud
Had lost his way between the piney sides
Of this long glen. Then to the bower they came,
Naked they came to that smooth-swarded bower,
And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,
Violet, amaracus and asphodel,
Lotos and lilies: and a wind arose,
And overhead the wandering ivy and vine,
This way and that, in many a wild festoon
Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs
With bunch and berry and flower thro' and thro'.

'O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
On the tree-tops a crested peacock lit,
And o'er him flow'd a golden cloud, and lean'd
Upon him, slowly dropping fragrant dew.
Then first I heard the voice of her, to whom
Coming thro' Heaven, like a light that grows
Larger and clearer, with one mind the Gods
Rise up for reverence. She to Paris made
Proffer of royal power, ample rule
Unquestion'd, overflowing revenue
Wherewith to embellish state, "from many a vale
And river-sunder'd champaign clothed with corn.
Or labour'd mine undrainable of ore.
Honour," she said, "and homage, tax and toll,

From many an inland town and haven large,
Mast-throng'd beneath her shadowing citadel
In glassy bays among her tallest towers."

'O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Still she spake on and still she spake of power,
"Which in all action is the end of all;
Power fitted to the season; wisdom-bred
And throned of wisdom—from all neighbouring crowns
Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand
Fail from the sceptre-staff. Such boon from me,
From me, Heaven's Queen, Paris, to thee king-born,
A shepherd all thy life but yet king-born,
Should come most welcome, seeing men, in power
Only, are likest gods, who have attain'd
Rest in a happy place and quiet seats
Above the thunder, with undying bliss
In knowledge of their own supremacy."

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit
Out at arm's length, so much the thought of power
Flatter'd his spirit; but Pallas where she stood
Somewhat apart, her clear and bared limbs
O'erthwarted with the brazen-headed spear
Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,
The while, above, her full and earnest eye
Over her snow-cold breast and angry cheek
Kept watch, waiting decision, made reply.

'"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
Yet not for power (power of herself
Would come uncall'd for) but to live by law,
Acting the law we live by without fear;
And, because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Again she said: "I woo thee not with gifts.
Sequel of guerdon could not alter me
To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,
So shalt thou find me fairest. Yet, indeed,
If gazing on divinity disrobed
Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair,
Unbias'd by self-profit, oh! rest thee sure
That I shall love thee well and cleave to thee,
So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,
Shall strike within thy pulses, like a God's,
To push thee forward thro' a life of shocks,
Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
Sinew'd with action, and the full-grown will,
Circled thro' all experiences, pure law,
Commeasure perfect freedom." 'Here she ceas'd,
And Paris ponder'd, and I cried, "O Paris,
Give it to Pallas!" but he heard me not,
Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me!

'O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Idalian Aphroditè beautiful,
Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian wells,
With rosy slender fingers backward drew
From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair
Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
And shoulder: from the violets her light foot
Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded form
Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved.

'Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes,
The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh,
Half-whisper'd in his ear, "I promise thee
The fairest and most loving wife in Greece,"

She spoke and laugh'd : I shut my sight for fear :
But when I look'd, Paris had raised his arm,
And I beheld great Herè's angry eyes,
As she withdrew into the golden cloud,
And I was left alone within the bower ;
And from that time to this I am alone,
And I shall be alone until I die.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
They came, they cut away my tallest pines,
My tall dark pines, that plumed the craggy ledge
High over the blue gorge, and all between
The snowy peak and snow-white cataract
Foster'd the callow eaglet—from beneath
Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark morn
The panther's roar came muffled, while I sat
Low in the valley. Never, never more
Shall lone Œnone see the morning mist
Sweep thro' them : never see them overlaid
With narrow moon-lit slips of silver cloud,
Between the loud stream and the trembling stars.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I wish that somewhere in the ruin'd folds,
Among the fragments tumbled from the glens,
Or the dry thickets, I could meet with her
The Abominable, that uninvited came
Into the fair Peleïan banquet-hall,
And cast the golden fruit upon the board,
And bred this change ; that I might speak my mind,
And tell her to her face how much I hate
Her presence, hated both of Gods and men.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hath he not sworn his love a thousand times,
In this green valley, under this green hill,
Ev'n on this hand, and sitting on this stone ?

Seal'd it with kisses? water'd it with tears?
O happy tears, and how unlike to these!
O happy Heaven, how canst thou see my face?
O happy earth, how canst thou bear my weight?
O death, death, death, thou ever-floating cloud,
There are enough unhappy on this earth,
Pass by the happy souls, that love to live:
I pray thee, pass before my light of life,
And shadow all my soul, that I may die.
Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,
Weigh heavy on my eyelids: let me die.

'O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,
Lest their shrill happy laughter come to me
Walking the cold and starless road of Death
Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love
With the Greek woman. I will rise and go
Down into Troy, and ere the stars come forth
Talk with the wild Cassandra, for she says
A fire dances before her, and a sound
Rings ever in her ears of armed men.
What this may be I know not, but I know
That wheresoe'er I am by night and day,
All earth and air seem only burning fire.

VII

THE LOTOS-EATERS

1833

'Courage!' he said, and pointed toward the land,
'This mounting wave will roll us shoreward soon.'
In the afternoon they came unto a land
In which it seemed always afternoon.
All round the coast the languid air did swoon,
Breathing like one that hath a weary dream.

Full-faced above the valley stood the moon ;
And like a downward smoke, the slender stream
Along the cliff to fall and pause and fall did seem.

A land of streams ! some, like a downward smoke,
Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn, did go ;
And some thro' wavering lights and shadows broke,
Rolling a slumbrous sheet of foam below.
They saw the gleaming river seaward flow
From the inner land : far off, three mountain-tops,
Three silent pinnacles of aged snow,
Stood sunset-flush'd : and, dew'd with showery drops,
Up-clomb the shadowy pine above the woven copse.

The charmed sunset linger'd low adown
In the red West : thro' mountain clefts the dale
Was seen far inland, and the yellow down
Border'd with palm, and many a winding vale
And meadow, set with slender galingale ;
A land where all things always seem'd the same !
And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed melancholy Lotos-eaters came.

Branches they bore of that enchanted stem,
Laden with flower and fruit, whereof they gave
To each, but whoso did receive of them,
And taste, to him the gushing of the wave
Far far away did seem to mourn and rave
On alien shores ; and if his fellow spake,
His voice was thin, as voices from the grave ;
And deep-asleep he seem'd, yet all awake,
And music in his ears his beating heart did make.

They sat them down upon the yellow sand,
Between the sun and moon upon the shore ;
And sweet it was to dream of Fatherland,
Of child, and wife, and slave ; but evermore

Most weary seem'd the sea, weary the oar,
Weary the wandering fields of barren foam.
Then some one said, 'We will return no more;'
And all at once they sang, 'Our island home
Is far beyond the wave; we will no longer roam.'

Choric Song

I

There is sweet music here that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses on the grass,
Or night-dews on still waters between walls
Of shadowy granite, in a gleaming pass;
Music that gentlier on the spirit lies,
Than tir'd eyelids upon tir'd eyes;
Music that brings sweet sleep down from the blissful skies.
Here are cool mosses deep,
And thro' the moss the ivies creep,
And in the stream the long-leaved flowers weep,
And from the craggy ledge the poppy hangs in sleep.

II

Why are we weigh'd upon with heaviness,
And utterly consumed with sharp distress,
While all things else have rest from weariness?
All things have rest: why should we toil alone,
We only toil, who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one sorrow to another thrown:
Nor ever fold our wings,
And cease from wanderings,
Nor steep our brows in slumber's holy balm;
Nor harken what the inner spirit sings,
'There is no joy but calm!'
Why should we only toil, the roof and crown of things?

III

Lo! in the middle of the wood,
The folded leaf is woo'd from out the bud
With winds upon the branch, and there
Grows green and broad, and takes no care,
Sun-steep'd at noon, and in the moon
Nightly dew-fed; and turning yellow
Falls, and floats adown the air.
Lo! sweeten'd with the summer light,
The full-juiced apple, waxing over-mellow,
Drops in a silent autumn night.
All its allotted length of days,
The flower ripens in its place,
Ripens and fades, and falls, and hath no toil,
Fast-rooted in the fruitful soil.

IV

Hateful is the dark-blue sky,
Vaulted o'er the dark-blue sea.
Death is the end of life; ah, why
Should life all labour be?
Let us alone. Time driveth onward fast,
And in a little while our lips are dumb.
Let us alone. What is it that will last?
All things are taken from us, and become
Portions and parcels of the dreadful Past.
Let us alone. What pleasure can we have
To war with evil? Is there any peace
In ever climbing up the climbing wave?
All things have rest, and ripen towards the grave
In silence; ripen, fall and cease:
Give us long rest or death, dark death, or dreamful ease.

V

How sweet it were, hearing the downward stream,
With half-shut eyes ever to seem
Falling asleep in a half-dream!

To dream and dream, like yonder amber light,
Which will not leave the myrrh-bush on the height;
To hear each other's whisper'd speech;
Eating the Lotos day by day,
To watch the crisping ripples on the beach,
And tender curving lines of creamy spray;
To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;
To muse and brood and live again in memory,
With those old faces of our infancy
Heap'd over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn of brass!

VI

Dear is the memory of our wedded lives,
And dear the last embraces of our wives
And their warm tears: but all hath suffer'd change:
For surely now our household hearths are cold:
Our sons inherit us: our looks are strange:
And we should come like ghosts to trouble joy.
Or else the island princes over-bold
Have eat our substance, and the minstrel sings
Before them of the ten years' war in Troy,
And our great deeds, as half-forgotten things.
Is there confusion in the little isle?
Let what is broken so remain.
The Gods are hard to reconcile:
'Tis hard to settle order once again.
There *is* confusion worse than death,
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
Long labour unto aged breath,
Sore task to hearts worn out by many wars
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot-stars.

VII

But, propt on beds of amaranth and moly,
How sweet (while warm airs lull us, blowing lowly)

With half-dropt eyelid still,
Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
To watch the long bright river drawing slowly
His waters from the purple hill—
To hear the dewy echoes calling
From cave to cave thro' the thick-twined vine—
To watch the emerald-colour'd water falling
Thro' many a wov'n acanthus-wreath divine!
Only to hear and see the far-off sparkling brine,
Only to hear were sweet, stretch'd out beneath the pine.

VIII

The Lotos blooms below the barren peak:
The Lotos blows by every winding creek:
All day the wind breathes low with mellower tone:
Thro' every hollow cave and alley lone
Round and round the spicy downs the yellow Lotos-dust is blown.
We have had enough of action, and of motion we,
Roll'd to starboard, roll'd to larboard, when the surge was seething free,
Where the wallowing monster spouted his foam-fountains in the sea.
Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,
In the hollow Lotos-land to live and lie reclined
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind.
For they lie beside their nectar, and the bolts are hurl'd
Far below them in the valleys, and the clouds are lightly curl'd
Round their golden houses, girdled with the gleaming world:
Where they smile in secret, looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and fiery sands,
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and praying hands.

But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful
song
Steaming up, a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong :
Chanted from an ill-used race of men that cleave the
soil,
Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,
Storing yearly little dues of wheat, and wine and oil ;
Till they perish and they suffer—some, 'tis whispered—
down in hell
Suffer endless anguish, others in Elysian valleys dwell,
Resting weary limbs at last on beds of asphodel.
Surely, surely, slumber is more sweet than toil, the shore
Than labour in the deep mid-ocean, wind and wave and
oar ;
Oh rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more.

VIII

FREEDOM

1833

Of old sat Freedom on the heights,
The thunders breaking at her feet :
Above her shook the starry lights :
She heard the torrents meet.

There in her place she did rejoice,
Self-gather'd in her prophet-mind,
But fragments of her mighty voice
Came rolling on the wind.

Then stept she down thro' town and field
To mingle with the human race,
And part by part to men reveal'd
The fullness of her face—

Grave mother of majestic works,
From her isle-altar gazing down,
Who, God-like, grasps the triple forks,
And, King-like, wears the crown:

Her open eyes desire the truth;
The wisdom of a thousand years
Is in them. May perpetual youth
Keep dry their light from tears;

That her fair form may stand and shine,
Make bright our days and light our dreams,
Turning to scorn with lips divine
The falsehood of extremes.

IX

ULYSSES

1842

It little profits that an idle king,
By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
Match'd with an aged wife, I mete and dole
Unequal laws unto a savage race,
That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
I cannot rest from travel: I will drink
Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly, both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy Hyades
Vext the dim sea: I am become a name;
For always roaming with a hungry heart
Much have I seen and known; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments,
Myself not least, but honour'd of them all;

And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
I am a part of all that I have met ;
Yet all experience is an arch wherethro'
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades
For ever and for ever when I move.
How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use !
As tho' to breathe were life. Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to me
Little remains : but every hour is saved
From that eternal silence, something more,
A bringer of new things ; and vile it were
For some three suns to store and hoard myself,
And this gray spirit yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star,
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought.
This is my son, mine own Telemachus,
To whom I leave the sceptre and the isle—
Well-loved of me, discerning to fulfil
This labour, by slow prudence to make mild
A rugged people, and thro' soft degrees
Subdue them to the useful and the good.
Most blameless is he, centred in the sphere
Of common duties, decent not to fail
In offices of tenderness, and pay
Meet adoration to my household gods,
When I am gone. He works his work, I mine.
There lies the port ; the vessel puffs her sail :
There gloom the dark broad seas. My mariners,
Souls that have toil'd, and wrought, and thought with me—
That ever with a frolic welcome took
The thunder and the sunshine, and opposed
Free hearts, free foreheads—you and I are old ;
Old age hath yet his honour and his toil ;
Death closes all : but something ere the end,

Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks :
The long day wanes : the slow moon climbs : the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows ; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash us down :
It may be we shall touch the Happy Isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides ; and tho'
We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven ; that which we are, we are ;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

X

THE DAY-DREAM

1842

The Sleeping Palace

I

The varying year with blade and sheaf
  Clothes and reclothes the happy plains,
Here rests the sap within the leaf,
  Here stays the blood along the veins.
Faint shadows, vapours lightly curl'd,
  Faint murmurs from the meadows come,
Like hints and echoes of the world
  To spirits folded in the womb.

II

Soft lustre bathes the range of urns
On every slanting terrace-lawn.
The fountain to his place returns
Deep in the garden lake withdrawn.
Here droops the banner on the tower,
On the hall-hearths the festal fires,
The peacock in his laurel bower,
The parrot in his gilded wires.

III

Roof-haunting martins warm their eggs :
In these, in those the life is stay'd.
The mantles from the golden pegs
Droop sleepily: no sound is made,
Not even of a gnat that sings.
More like a picture seemeth all
Than those old portraits of old kings,
That watch the sleepers from the wall.

IV

Here sits the Butler with a flask
Between his knees, half-drain'd ; and there
The wrinkled steward at his task,
The maid-of-honour blooming fair ;
The page has caught her hand in his :
Her lips are sever'd as to speak ;
His own are pouted to a kiss :
The blush is fix'd upon her cheek.

V

Till all the hundred summers pass,
The beams, that thro' the Oriel shine,
Make prisms in every carven glass,
And beaker brimm'd with noble wine.

Each baron at the banquet sleeps,
  Grave faces gather'd in a ring.
His state the king reposing keeps.
  He must have been a jovial king.

VI

All round a hedge upshoots, and shows
  At distance like a little wood;
Thorns, ivies, woodbine, mistletoes,
  And grapes with bunches red as blood;
All creeping plants, a wall of green
  Close-matted, bur and brake and briar,
And glimpsing over these, just seen,
  High up, the topmost palace spire.

VII

When will the hundred summers die,
  And thought and time be born again,
And newer knowledge, drawing nigh,
  Bring truth that sways the soul of men?
Here all things in their place remain,
  As all were order'd, ages since.
Come, Care and Pleasure, Hope and Pain,
  And bring the fated fairy Prince.

The Sleeping Beauty

I

Year after year unto her feet,
  She lying on her couch alone,
Across the purple coverlet,
  The maiden's jet-black hair has grown,
On either side her tranced form
  Forth streaming from a braid of pearl:
The slumbrous light is rich and warm,
  And moves not on the rounded curl.

II

The silk star-broider'd coverlid
Unto her limbs itself doth mould
Languidly ever; and, amid
Her full black ringlets downward roll'd,
Glows forth each softly-shadow'd arm
With bracelets of the diamond bright:
Her constant beauty doth inform
Stillness with love, and day with light.

III

She sleeps: her breathings are not heard
In palace chambers far apart.
The fragrant tresses are not stirr'd
That lie upon her charmed heart.
She sleeps: on either hand upswells
The gold-fringed pillow lightly prest:
She sleeps, nor dreams, but ever dwells
A perfect form in perfect rest.

The Arrival

I

All precious things, discover'd late,
To those that seek them issue forth;
For love in sequel works with fate,
And draws the veil from hidden worth.
He travels far from other skies—
His mantle glitters on the rocks—
A fairy Prince, with joyful eyes,
And lighter-footed than the fox.

II

The bodies and the bones of those
That strove in other days to pass
Are wither'd in the thorny close,
Or scatter'd blanching on the grass.

He gazes on the silent dead :
'They perish'd in their daring deeds.'
This proverb flashes thro' his head,
'The many fail : the one succeeds.'

III

He comes, scarce knowing what he seeks :
He breaks the hedge ; he enters there :
The colour flies into his cheeks :
He trusts to light on something fair ;
For all his life the charm did talk
About his path, and hover near
With words of promise in his walk,
And whisper'd voices at his ear.

IV

More close and close his footsteps wind :
The Magic Music in his heart
Beats quick and quicker, till he find
The quiet chamber far apart.
His spirit flutters like a lark,
He stoops—to kiss her—on his knee.
'Love, if thy tresses be so dark,
How dark those hidden eyes must be !'

The Revival

I

A touch, a kiss ! the charm was snapt.
There rose a noise of striking clocks,
And feet that ran, and doors that clapt,
And barking dogs, and crowing cocks ;
A fuller light illumined all,
A breeze thro' all the garden swept,
A sudden hubbub shook the hall,
And sixty feet the fountain leapt.

II

The hedge broke in, the banner blew,
The butler drank, the steward scrawl'd,
The fire shot up, the martin flew,
The parrot scream'd, the peacock squall'd,
The maid and page renew'd their strife,
The palace bang'd, and buzz'd and clackt,
And all the long-pent stream of life
Dash'd downward in a cataract.

III

And last with these the king awoke,
And in his chair himself uprear'd,
And yawn'd, and rubb'd his face, and spoke,
'By holy rood, a royal beard!
How say you? we have slept, my lords.
My beard has grown into my lap.'
The barons swore, with many words,
'Twas but an after-dinner's nap.

IV

'Pardy,' return'd the king, 'but still
My joints are somewhat stiff or so.
My lord, and shall we pass the bill
I mention'd half an hour ago?'
The chancellor, sedate and vain,
In courteous words return'd reply:
But dallied with his golden chain,
And, smiling, put the question by.

The Departure

I

And on her lover's arm she leant,
And round her waist she felt it fold,
And far across the hills they went
In that new world which is the old:

Across the hills, and far away
  Beyond their utmost purple rim,
And deep into the dying day
  The happy princess follow'd him.

II

'I'd sleep another hundred years,
  O love, for such another kiss;'
'O wake for ever, love,' she hears,
  'O love, 'twas such as this and this.'
And o'er them many a sliding star,
  And many a merry wind was borne,
And, stream'd thro' many a golden bar,
  The twilight melted into morn.

III

'O eyes long laid in happy sleep!'
  'O happy sleep, that lightly fled!'
'O happy kiss, that woke thy sleep!'
  'O love, thy kiss would wake the dead!'
And o'er them many a flowing range
  Of vapour buoy'd the crescent-bark,
And, rapt thro' many a rosy change,
  The twilight died into the dark.

IV

'A hundred summers! can it be?
  And whither goest thou, tell me where?'
'O seek my father's court with me,
  For there are greater wonders there.'
And o'er the hills, and far away
  Beyond their utmost purple rim,
Beyond the night, across the day,
  Thro' all the world she follow'd him.

XI

ST. AGNES' EVE

1842

Deep on the convent-roof the snows
Are sparkling to the moon :
My breath to heaven like vapour goes :
May my soul follow soon !
The shadows of the convent-towers
Slant down the snowy sward,
Still creeping with the creeping hours
That lead me to my Lord :
Make Thou my spirit pure and clear
As are the frosty skies,
Or this first snowdrop of the year
That in my bosom lies.

As these white robes are soil'd and dark,
To yonder shining ground ;
As this pale taper's earthly spark,
To yonder argent round ;
So shows my soul before the Lamb,
My spirit before Thee ;
So in mine earthly house I am,
To that I hope to be.
Break up the heavens, O Lord ! and far,
Thro' all yon starlight keen,
Draw me, thy bride, a glittering star,
In raiment white and clean.

He lifts me to the golden doors ;
The flashes come and go ;
All heaven bursts her starry floors,
And strows her lights below,
And deepens on and up ! the gates
Roll back, and far within

For me the Heavenly Bridegroom waits,
To make me pure of sin.
The sabbaths of Eternity,
One sabbath deep and wide—
A light upon the shining sea—
The Bridegroom with his bride!

XII

THE LORD OF BURLEIGH

1842

In her ear he whispers gaily,
'If my heart by signs can tell,
Maiden, I have watch'd thee daily,
And I think thou lov'st me well.'
She replies, in accents fainter,
'There is none I love like thee.'
He is but a landscape-painter,
And a village maiden she.
He to lips, that fondly falter,
Presses his without reproof:
Leads her to the village altar,
And they leave her father's roof.
'I can make no marriage present:
Little can I give my wife.
Love will make our cottage pleasant,
And I love thee more than life.'
They by parks and lodges going
See the lordly castles stand:
Summer woods, about them blowing,
Made a murmur in the land.
From deep thought himself he rouses,
Says to her that loves him well,
'Let us see these handsome houses
Where the wealthy nobles dwell.'

So she goes by him attended,
Hears him lovingly converse,
Sees whatever fair and splendid
Lay betwixt his home and hers;
Parks with oak and chestnut shady,
Parks and order'd gardens great,
Ancient homes of lord and lady,
Built for pleasure and for state.
All he shows her makes him dearer:
Evermore she seems to gaze
On that cottage growing nearer,
Where they twain will spend their days.
O but she will love him truly!
He shall have a cheerful home;
She will order all things duly,
When beneath his roof they come.
Thus her heart rejoices greatly,
Till a gateway she discerns
With armorial bearings stately,
And beneath the gate she turns;
Sees a mansion more majestic
Than all those she saw before:
Many a gallant gay domestic
Bows before him at the door.
And they speak in gentle murmur,
When they answer to his call,
While he treads with footstep firmer,
Leading on from hall to hall.
And, while now she wonders blindly,
Nor the meaning can divine,
Proudly turns he round and kindly,
'All of this is mine and thine.'
Here he lives in state and bounty,
Lord of Burleigh, fair and free,
Not a lord in all the county
Is so great a lord as he.

All at once the colour flushes
  Her sweet face from brow to chin
As it were with shame she blushes,
  And her spirit changed within.
Then her countenance all over
  Pale again as death did prove :
But he clasp'd her like a lover,
  And he cheer'd her soul with love.
So she strove against her weakness,
  Tho' at times her spirit sank :
Shaped her heart with woman's meekness
  To all duties of her rank :
And a gentle consort made he,
  And her gentle mind was such
That she grew a noble lady,
  And the people loved her much.
But a trouble weigh'd upon her,
  And perplex'd her, night and morn,
With the burthen of an honour
  Unto which she was not born.
Faint she grew, and ever fainter,
  And she murmur'd, 'Oh, that he
Were once more that landscape-painter,
  Which did win my heart from me!'
So she droop'd and droop'd before him,
  Fading slowly from his side :
Three fair children first she bore him,
  Then before her time she died.
Weeping, weeping late and early,
  Walking up and pacing down,
Deeply mourn'd the Lord of Burleigh,
  Burleigh-house by Stamford-town.
And he came to look upon her,
  And he look'd at her and said,
'Bring the dress and put it on her,
  That she wore when she was wed.'

Then her people, softly treading,
Bore to earth her body, drest
In the dress that she was wed in,
That her spirit might have rest.

XIII

A FAREWELL

1842

Flow down, cold rivulet, to the sea,
Thy tribute wave deliver:
No more by thee my steps shall be,
For ever and for ever.

Flow, softly flow, by lawn and lea,
A rivulet then a river:
No where by thee my steps shall be,
For ever and for ever.

But here will sigh thine alder tree,
And here thine aspen shiver;
And here by thee will hum the bee,
For ever and for ever.

A thousand suns will stream on thee,
A thousand moons will quiver;
But not by thee my steps shall be,
For ever and for ever.

XIV

THE EAGLE

1842

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

XV

BREAK, BREAK, BREAK

1842

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me.

O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!

And the stately ships go on
To their haven under the hill;
But O for the touch of a vanish'd hand,
And the sound of a voice that is still!

Break, break, break,
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!
But the tender grace of a day that is dead
Will never come back to me.

XVI

THE POET'S SONG

1842

The rain had fallen, the Poet arose,
He pass'd by the town and out of the street,
A light wind blew from the gates of the sun,
And waves of shadow went over the wheat,
And he sat him down in a lonely place,
And chanted a melody loud and sweet,
That made the wild-swan pause in her cloud,
And the lark drop down at his feet.

The swallow stopt as he hunted the fly,
  The snake slipt under a spray,
The wild hawk stood with the down on his beak,
  And stared, with his foot on the prey,
And the nightingale thought, 'I have sung many songs,
  But never a one so gay,
For he sings of what the world will be
  When the years have died away.'

XVII

SONGS FROM 'THE PRINCESS'

1847

I

The splendour falls on castle walls
  And snowy summits old in story:
The long light shakes across the lakes,
  And the wild cataract leaps in glory.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O hark, O hear! how thin and clear,
  And thinner, clearer, farther going!
O sweet and far from cliff and scar
  The horns of Elfland faintly blowing!
Blow, let us hear the purple glens replying:
Blow, bugle; answer, echoes, dying, dying, dying.

O love, they die in yon rich sky,
  They faint on hill or field or river:
Our echoes roll from soul to soul,
  And grow for ever and for ever.
Blow, bugle, blow, set the wild echoes flying,
And answer, echoes, answer, dying, dying, dying.

II

Thy voice is heard thro' rolling drums,
That beat to battle where he stands;
Thy face across his fancy comes,
And gives the battle to his hands:
A moment, while the trumpets blow,
He sees his brood about thy knee;
The next, like fire he meets the foe,
And strikes him dead for thine and thee.

III

Home they brought her warrior dead:
She nor swoon'd, nor utter'd cry:
All her maidens, watching, said,
'She must weep or she will die.'

Then they praised him, soft and low,
Call'd him worthy to be loved,
Truest friend and noblest foe;
Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

Stole a maiden from her place,
Lightly to the warrior stept,
Took the face-cloth from the face;
Yet she neither moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,
Set his child upon her knee—
Like summer tempest came her tears—
'Sweet my child, I live for thee.'

XVIII

'CHRISTMASTIDE,' FROM *IN MEMORIAM*

1850

CIV.

The time draws near the birth of Christ;
The moon is hid, the night is still;
A single church below the hill
Is pealing, folded in the mist.

A single peal of bells below,
That wakens at this hour of rest
A single murmur in the breast,
That these are not the bells I know.

Like strangers' voices here they sound,
In lands where not a memory strays,
Nor landmark breathes of other days,
But all is new unhallow'd ground.

CV.

To-night ungather'd let us leave
This laurel, let this holly stand:
We live within the stranger's land,
And strangely falls our Christmas-eve.

Our father's dust is left alone
And silent under other snows:
There in due time the woodbine blows,
The violet comes, but we are gone.

No more shall wayward grief abuse
The genial hour with mask and mime;
For change of place, like growth of time,
Has broke the bond of dying use.

Let cares that petty shadows cast,
By which our lives are chiefly proved,
A little spare the night I loved,
And hold it solemn to the past.

But let no footstep beat the floor,
Nor bowl of wassail mantle warm;
For who would keep an ancient form
Thro' which the spirit breathes no more?

Be neither song, nor game, nor feast;
Nor harp be touch'd, nor flute be blown;
No dance, no motion, save alone
What lightens in the lucid east

Of rising worlds by yonder wood.
Long sleeps the summer in the seed ;
Run out your measured arcs, and lead
The closing cycle rich in good.

CVI.

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky,
The flying cloud, the frosty light :
The year is dying in the night ;
Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow :
The year is going, let him go ;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind,
For those that here we see no more ;
Ring out the feud of rich and poor,
Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife ;
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin,
The faithless coldness of the times ;
Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes,
But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite ;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease ;
Ring out the narrowing lust of gold ;
Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be.

XIX

ODE ON THE DEATH OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON

1852

I

Bury the Great Duke
With an empire's lamentation,
Let us bury the Great Duke
To the noise of the mourning of a mighty nation,
Mourning when their leaders fall,
Warriors carry the warrior's pall,
And sorrow darkens hamlet and hall.

II

Where shall we lay the man whom we deplore?
Here, in streaming London's central roar.
Let the sound of those he wrought for,
And the feet of those he fought for,
Echo round his bones for evermore.

III

Lead out the pageant: sad and slow,
As fits an universal woe,
Let the long long procession go,
And let the sorrowing crowd about it grow,
And let the mournful martial music blow;
The last great Englishman is low.

IV

Mourn, for to us he seems the last,
Remembering all his greatness in the Past.
No more in soldier fashion will he greet
With lifted hand the gazer in the street.
O friends, our chief state-oracle is mute:
Mourn for the man of long-enduring blood,
The statesman-warrior, moderate, resolute,
Whole in himself, a common good.
Mourn for the man of amplest influence,
Yet clearest of ambitious crime,
Our greatest yet with least pretence,
Great in council and great in war,
Foremost captain of his time,
Rich in saving common-sense,
And, as the greatest only are,
In his simplicity sublime.
O good gray head which all men knew,
O voice from which their omens all men drew,
O iron nerve to true occasion true,
O fall'n at length that tower of strength
Which stood four-square to all the winds that blew!
Such was he whom we deplore.
The long self-sacrifice of life is o'er.
The great World-victor's victor will be seen no more.

V

All is over and done:
Render thanks to the Giver,
England, for thy son.
Let the bell be toll'd.
Render thanks to the Giver,
And render him to the mould.
Under the cross of gold
That shines over city and river,
There he shall rest for ever

Among the wise and the bold.
Let the bell be toll'd :
And a reverent people behold
The towering car, the sable steeds :
Bright let it be with its blazon'd deeds,
Dark in its funeral fold.
Let the bell be toll'd :
And a deeper knell in the heart be knoll'd ;
And the sound of the sorrowing anthem roll'd
Thro' the dome of the golden cross ;
And the volleying cannon thunder his loss ;
He knew their voices of old.
For many a time in many a clime
His captain's ear has heard them boom
Bellowing victory, bellowing doom :
When he with those deep voices wrought,
Guarding realms and kings from shame ;
With those deep voices our dead captain taught
The tyrant, and asserts his claim
In that dread sound to the great name,
Which he has worn so pure of blame,
In praise and in dispraise the same,
A man of well-attemper'd frame.
O civic muse, to such a name,
To such a name for ages long,
To such a name,
Preserve a broad approach of fame,
And ever-echoing avenues of song.

VI

"Who is he that cometh, like an honour'd guest,
With banner and with music, with soldier and with priest,
With a nation weeping, and breaking on my rest ?"
Mighty Seaman, this is he
Was great by land as thou by sea.
Thine island loves thee well, thou famous man,

The greatest sailor since our world began.
Now, to the roll of muffled drums,
To thee the greatest soldier comes ;
For this is he
Was great by land as thou by sea ;
His foes were thine ; he kept us free ;
O give him welcome, this is he
Worthy of our gorgeous rites,
And worthy to be laid by thee ;
For this is England's greatest son,
He that gain'd a hundred fights,
Nor ever lost an English gun ;
This is he that far away
Against the myriads of Assaye
Clash'd with his fiery few and won ;
And underneath another sun,
Warring on a later day,
Round affrighted Lisbon drew
The treble works, the vast designs
Of his labour'd rampart-lines,
Where he greatly stood at bay,
Whence he issued forth anew,
And ever great and greater grew,
Beating from the wasted vines
Back to France her banded swarms,
Back to France with countless blows,
Till o'er the hills her eagles flew
Beyond the Pyrenean pines,
Follow'd up in valley and glen
With blare of bugle, clamour of men,
Roll of cannon and clash of arms,
And England pouring on her foes.
Such a war had such a close.
Again their ravening eagle rose
In anger, wheel'd on Europe-shadowing wings,
And barking for the thrones of kings ;

Till one that sought but duty's iron crown
On that loud sabbath shook the spoiler down ;
A day of onsets of despair !
Dash'd on every rocky square
Their surging charges foam'd themselves away ;
Last, the Prussian trumpet blew ;
Thro' the long-tormented air
Heaven flash'd a sudden jubilant ray,
And down we swept and charged and overthrew.
So great a soldier taught us there,
What long-enduring hearts could do
In that world-earthquake, Waterloo !
Mighty Seaman, tender and true,
And pure as he from taint of craven guile,
O saviour of the silver-coasted isle,
O shaker of the Baltic and the Nile,
If aught of things that here befall
Touch a spirit among things divine,
If love of country move thee there at all,
Be glad, because his bones are laid by thine !
And thro' the centuries let a people's voice
In full acclaim,
A people's voice,
The proof and echo of all human fame,
A people s voice, when they rejoice
At civic revel and pomp and game,
Attest their great commander's claim
With honour, honour, honour, honour to him,
Eternal honour to his name.

VII

A people's voice ! we are a people yet,
Tho' all men else their nobler dreams forget,
Confused by brainless mobs and lawless Powers ;
Thank Him who isled us here, and roughly set
His Briton in blown seas and storming showers,

We have a voice, with which to pay the debt
Of boundless love and reverence and regret
To those great men who fought, and kept it ours.
And keep it ours, O God, from brute control ;
O Statesmen, guard us, guard the eye, the soul
Of Europe, keep our noble England whole,
And save the one true seed of freedom sown
Betwixt a people and their ancient throne,
That sober freedom out of which there springs
Our loyal passion for our temperate kings ;
For, saving that, ye help to save mankind
Till public wrong be crumbled into dust,
And drill the raw world for the march of mind,
Till crowds at length be sane and crowns be just.
But wink no more in slothful overtrust.
Remember him who led your hosts ;
He bad you guard the sacred coasts.
Your cannons moulder on the seaward wall ;
His voice is silent in your council-hall
For ever ; and whatever tempests lour
For ever silent ; even if they broke
In thunder, silent ; yet remember all
He spoke among you, and the Man who spoke ;
Who never sold the truth to serve the hour,
Nor palter'd with Eternal God for power ;
Who let the turbid streams of rumour flow
Thro' either babbling world of high and low ;
Whose life was work, whose language rife
With rugged maxims hewn from life ;
Who never spoke against a foe ;
Whose eighty winters freeze with one rebuke
All great self-seekers trampling on the right :
Truth-teller was our England's Alfred named ;
Truth-lover was our English Duke ;
Whatever record leap to light
He never shall be shamed.

VIII

Lo, the leader in these glorious wars
Now to glorious burial slowly borne,
Follow'd by the brave of other lands,
He, on whom from both her open hands
Lavish Honour shower'd all her stars,
And affluent Fortune emptied all her horn.
Yea, let all good things await
Him who cares not to be great,
But as he saves or serves the state.
Not once or twice in our rough island-story,
The path of duty was the way to glory :
He that walks it, only thirsting
For the right, and learns to deaden
Love of self, before his journey closes,
He shall find the stubborn thistle bursting
Into glossy purples, which outredden
All voluptuous garden-roses.
Not once or twice in our fair island-story,
The path of duty was the way to glory :
He, that ever following her commands,
On with toil of heart and knees and hands,
Thro' the long gorge to the far light has won
His path upward, and prevail'd,
Shall find the toppling crags of Duty scaled
Are close upon the shining table-lands
To which our God Himself is moon and sun.
Such was he : his work is done.
But while the races of mankind endure,
Let his great example stand
Colossal, seen of every land,
And keep the soldier firm, the statesman pure :
Till in all lands and thro' all human story
The path of duty be the way to glory :
And let the land whose hearths he saved from shame
For many and many an age proclaim

At civic revel and pomp and game,
And when the long-illumined cities flame,
Their ever-loyal iron leader's fame,
With honour, honour, honour, honour to him,
Eternal honour to his name.

IX

Peace, his triumph will be sung
By some yet unmoulded tongue
Far on in summers that we shall not see :
Peace, it is a day of pain
For one about whose patriarchal knee
Late the little children clung :
O peace, it is a day of pain
For one, upon whose hand and heart and brain
Once the weight and fate of Europe hung.
Ours the pain, be his the gain !
More than is of man's degree
Must be with us, watching here
At this, our great solemnity.
Whom we see not we revere ;
We revere, and we refrain
From talk of battles loud and vain,
And brawling memories all too free
For such a wise humility
As befits a solemn fane :
We revere, and while we hear
The tides of Music's golden sea
Setting toward eternity,
Uplifted high in heart and hope are we,
Until we doubt not that for one so true
There must be other nobler work to do
Than when he fought at Waterloo,
And Victor he must ever be.
For tho' the Giant Ages heave the hill
And break the shore, and evermore

Make and break, and work their will ;
Tho' world on world in myriad myriads roll
Round us, each with different powers,
And other forms of life than ours,
What know we greater than the soul ?
On God and Godlike men we build our trust.
Hush, the Dead March wails in the people's ears :
The dark crowd moves, and there are sobs and tears :
The black earth yawns : the mortal disappears ;
Ashes to ashes, dust to dust ;
He is gone who seem'd so great.—
Gone ; but nothing can bereave him
Of the force he made his own
Being here, and we believe him
Something far advanced in State,
And that he wears a truer crown
Than any wreath that man can weave him.
Speak no more of his renown,
Lay your earthly fancies down,
And in the vast cathedral leave him,
God accept him, Christ receive him.

XX

THE BROOK

1855

I COME from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally,
And sparkle out among the fern,
To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorps, a little town,
And half a hundred bridges.

Till last by Philip's farm I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles,
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.

I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go
But I go on for ever.

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout
And here and there a grayling

And here and there a foamy flake
Upon me, as I travel
With many a silvery waterbreak
Above the golden gravel,

And draw them all along, and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots,
I slide by hazel covers;
I move the sweet forget-me-nots
That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows;
I make the netted sunbeam dance
Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses;
I linger by my shingly bars;
I loiter round my cresses;

And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

XXI

GARETH AND LYNETTE

1872

Gareth wishes to become a knight at Arthur's court.

The last tall son of Lot and Bellicent,
And tallest, Gareth, in a showerful spring
Stared at the spate. A slender-shafted Pine
Lost footing, fell, and so was whirl'd away.
'How he went down,' said Gareth, 'as a false knight
Or evil king before my lance if lance
Were mine to use—O senseless cataract,
Bearing all down in thy precipitancy—
And yet thou art but swollen with cold snows
And mine is living blood: thou dost His will,
The Maker's, and not knowest, and I that know,
Have strength and wit, in my good mother's hall
Linger with vacillating obedience,
Prison'd, and kept and coax'd and whistled to—
Since the good mother holds me still a child!
Good mother is bad mother unto me!

A worse were better; yet no worse would I.
Heaven yield her for it, but in me put force
To weary her ears with one continuous prayer,
Until she let me fly discaged to sweep
In ever-highering eagle-circles up
To the great Sun of Glory, and thence swoop
Down upon all things base, and dash them dead,
A knight of Arthur, working out his will,
To cleanse the world.'

. . . . . .

The Queen, his mother, lets him go under conditions.

So when the Queen, who long had sought in vain
To break him from the intent to which he grew,
Found her son's will unwaveringly one,
She answer'd craftily, 'Will ye walk thro' fire?
Who walks thro' fire will hardly heed the smoke.
Ay, go then, an ye must: only one proof,
Before thou ask the King to make thee knight,
Of thine obedience and thy love to me,
Thy mother,—I demand.'
And Gareth cried,
'A hard one, or a hundred, so I go.
Nay—quick! the proof to prove me to the quick!'

But slowly spake the mother looking at him,
'Prince, thou shalt go disguised to Arthur's hall,
And hire thyself to serve for meats and drinks
Among the scullions and the kitchen-knaves,
And those that hand the dish across the bar.
Nor shalt thou tell thy name to anyone.
And thou shalt serve a twelvemonth and a day.'

For so the Queen believed that when her son
Beheld his only way to glory lead
Low down thro' villain kitchen-vassalage,

Her own true Gareth was too princely-proud
To pass thereby ; so should he rest with her,
Closed in her castle from the sound of arms.

Silent awhile was Gareth, then replied,
'The thrall in person may be free in soul,
And I shall see the jousts. Thy son am I,
And since thou art my mother, must obey.
I therefore yield me freely to thy will ;
For hence will I, disguised, and hire myself
To serve with scullions and with kitchen-knaves ;
Nor tell my name to any—no, not the King.'

Gareth awhile linger'd. The mother's eye
Full of the wistful fear that he would go,
And turning toward him wheresoe'er he turn'd,
Perplext his outward purpose, till an hour,
When waken'd by the wind which with full voice
Swept bellowing thro' the darkness on to dawn,
He rose, and out of slumber calling two
That still had tended on him from his birth,
Before the wakeful mother heard him, went.

. . . . . .

Gareth and his companions come to Camelot.

He spake and laugh'd, then enter'd with his twain
Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces
And stately, rich in emblem and the work
Of ancient kings who did their days in stone ;
Which Merlin's hand, the Mage at Arthur's court,
Knowing all arts, had touch'd, and everywhere
At Arthur's ordinance, tipt with lessening peak
And pinnacle, and had made it spire to heaven.
And ever and anon a knight would pass
Outward, or inward to the hall : his arms
Clash'd ; and the sound was good to Gareth's ear.

And out of bower and casement shyly glanced
Eyes of pure women, wholesome stars of love;
And all about a healthful people stept
As in the presence of a gracious king.

Then into hall Gareth ascending heard
A voice, the voice of Arthur, and beheld
Far over heads in that long-vaulted hall
The splendour of the presence of the King
Throned, and delivering doom—and look'd no more—
But felt his young heart hammering in his ears,
And thought, 'For this half-shadow of a lie
The truthful King will doom me when I speak.'

. . . . . .

Gareth takes service with King Arthur.

Last, Gareth leaning both hands heavily
Down on the shoulders of the twain, his men,
Approach'd between them toward the King, and ask'd,
'A boon, Sir King (his voice was all ashamed),
For see ye not how weak and hungerworn
I seem—leaning on these? grant me to serve
For meat and drink among thy kitchen-knaves
A twelvemonth and a day, nor seek my name.
Hereafter I will fight.'
To him the King,
'A goodly youth and worth a goodlier boon!
But so thou wilt no goodlier, then must Kay,
The master of the meats and drinks, be thine.'

. . . . .

So Gareth all for glory underwent
The sooty yoke of kitchen-vassalage;
Ate with young lads his portion by the door,
And couch'd at night with grimy kitchen-knaves.
And Lancelot ever spake him pleasantly,
But Kay the seneschal, who loved him not,

Would hustle and harry him, and labour him
Beyond his comrade of the hearth, and set
To turn the broach, draw water, or hew wood,
Or grosser tasks ; and Gareth bow'd himself
With all obedience to the King, and wrought
All kind of service with a noble ease
That graced the lowliest act in doing it.

. . . . . .

Gareth receives knighthood, and is appointed champion to Lynette.

So for a month he wrought among the thralls;
But in the weeks that follow'd, the good Queen,
Repentant of the word she made him swear,
And saddening in her childless castle, sent,
Between the in-crescent and de-crescent moon,
Arms for her son, and loosed him from his vow.

This, Gareth hearing from a squire of Lot
With whom he used to play at tourney once,
When both were children, and in lonely haunts
Would scratch a ragged oval on the sand,
And each at either dash from either end—
Shame never made girl redder than Gareth joy.
He laugh'd ; he sprang. 'Out of the smoke, at once
I leap from Satan's foot to Peter's knee—
These news be mine, none other's—nay, the King's—
Descend into the city :' whereon he sought
The King alone, and found, and told him all.

'I have stagger'd thy strong Gawain in a tilt
For pastime ; yea, he said it : joust can I.
Make me thy knight—in secret ! let my name
Be hidd'n, and give me the first quest, I spring
Like flame from ashes.'

Here the King's calm eye
Fell on, and check'd, and made him flush, and bow

Lowly, to kiss his hand, who answer'd him,
'Son, the good mother let me know thee here,
And sent her wish that I would yield thee thine.
Make thee my knight? my knights are sworn to vows
Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,
And, loving, utter faithfulness in love,
And uttermost obedience to the King.'

Then Gareth, lightly springing from his knees,
'My King, for hardihood I can promise thee.
For uttermost obedience make demand
Of whom ye gave me to, the Seneschal,
No mellow master of the meats and drinks!
And as for love, God wot, I love not yet,
But love I shall, God willing.'

And the King—
'Make thee my knight in secret? yea, but he,
Our noblest brother, and our truest man,
And one with me in all, he needs must know.'

'Let Lancelot know, my King, let Lancelot know,
Thy noblest and thy truest!'

And the King—
'But wherefore would ye men should wonder at you?
Nay, rather for the sake of me, their King,
And the deed's sake my knighthood do the deed,
Than to be noised of.'

Merrily Gareth ask'd,
'Have I not earn'd my cake in baking of it?
Let be my name until I make my name!
My deeds will speak: it is but for a day.'
So with a kindly hand on Gareth's arm
Smiled the great King, and half-unwillingly
Loving his lusty youthhood yielded to him.
Then, after summoning Lancelot privily,

'I have given him the first quest: he is not proven.
Look therefore when he calls for this in hall,
Thou get to horse and follow him far away.
Cover the lions on thy shield, and see
Far as thou mayest, he be nor ta'en nor slain.'

Then that same day there past into the hall
A damsel of high lineage, and a brow
May-blossom, and a cheek of apple-blossom,
Hawk-eyes; and lightly was her slender nose
Tip-tilted like the petal of a flower;
She into hall past with her page and cried,

'O King, for thou hast driven the foe without,
See to the foe within! bridge, ford, beset
By bandits, everyone that owns a tower
The Lord for half a league. Why sit ye there?
Rest would I not, Sir King, an I were king,
Till ev'n the lonest hold were all as free
From cursed bloodshed, as thine altar-cloth
From that best blood it is a sin to spill.'

'Comfort thyself,' said Arthur, 'I nor mine
Rest: so my knighthood keep the vows they swore,
The wastest moorland of our realm shall be
Safe, damsel, as the centre of this hall.
What is thy name? thy need?'
'My name?' she said—
'Lynette my name; noble; my need, a knight
To combat for my sister, Lyonors,
A lady of high lineage, of great lands,
And comely, yea, and comelier than myself.
She lives in Castle Perilous: a river
Runs in three loops about her living-place;
And o'er it are three passings, and three knights
Defend the passings, brethren, and a fourth
And of that four the mightiest, holds her stay'd

In her own castle, and so besieges her
To break her will, and make her wed with him :
And but delays his purport till thou send
To do the battle with him, thy chief man
Sir Lancelot whom he trusts to overthrow,
Then wed, with glory : but she will not wed
Save whom she loveth, or a holy life.
Now therefore have I come for Lancelot.'

Then Arthur mindful of Sir Gareth ask'd,
'Damsel, ye know this Order lives to crush
All wrongers of the Realm. But say, these four,
Who be they? What the fashion of the men?'

'They be of foolish fashion, O Sir King,
The fashion of that old knight-errantry
Who ride abroad, and do but what they will ;
Courteous or bestial from the moment, such
As have nor law nor king ; and three of these
Proud in their fantasy call themselves the Day,
Morning-Star, and Noon-Sun, and Evening-Star,
Being strong fools ; and never a whit more wise
The fourth, who alway rideth arm'd in black,
A huge man-beast of boundless savagery.
He names himself the Night and oftener Death,
And wears a helmet mounted with a skull,
And bears a skeleton figured on his arms,
To show that who may slay or scape the three,
Slain by himself, shall enter endless night.
And all these four be fools, but mighty men,
And therefore am I come for Lancelot.'

Hereat Sir Gareth call'd from where he rose,
A head with kindling eyes above the throng,
'A boon, Sir King—this quest!' then—for he mark'd
Kay near him groaning like a wounded bull—
'Yea, King, thou knowest thy kitchen-knave am I,

And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks am I,
And I can topple over a hundred such.
Thy promise, King,' and Arthur glancing at him,
Brought down a momentary brow. 'Rough, sudden,
And pardonable, worthy to be knight—
Go therefore,' and all hearers were amazed.

But on the damsel's forehead shame, pride, wrath
Slew the May-white: she lifted either arm,
'Fie on thee, King! I ask'd for thy chief knight,
And thou hast given me but a kitchen-knave.'
Then ere a man in hall could stay her, turn'd,
Fled down the lane of access to the King,
Took horse, descended the slope street, and past
The weird white gate, and paused without, beside
The field of tourney, murmuring 'kitchen-knave.'

. . . . . .

The first encounter—Sir Morning-Star.

Then to the shore of one of those long loops
Wherethro' the serpent river coil'd, they came.
Rough-thicketed were the banks and steep; the stream
Full, narrow; this a bridge of single arc
Took at a leap; and on the further side
Arose a silk pavilion, gay with gold
In streaks and rays, and all Lent-lily in hue,
Save that the dome was purple, and above,
Crimson, a slender banneret fluttering.
And therebefore the lawless warrior paced
Unarm'd, and calling, 'Damsel, is this he,
The champion thou hast brought from Arthur's hall?
For whom we let thee pass.' 'Nay, nay,' she said,
'Sir Morning-Star. The King in utter scorn
Of thee and thy much folly hath sent thee here
His kitchen-knave: and look thou to thyself:
See that he fall not on thee suddenly,
And slay thee unarm'd: he is not knight but knave.'

Then at his call, 'O daughters of the Dawn,
And servants of the Morning-Star, approach,
Arm me,' from out the silken curtain-folds
Bare-footed and bare-headed three fair girls
In gilt and rosy raiment came: their feet
In dewy grasses glisten'd; and the hair
All over glanced with dewdrop or with gem
Like sparkles in the stone Avanturine.
These arm'd him in blue arms, and gave a shield
Blue also, and thereon the morning star.
And Gareth silent gazed upon the knight,
Who stood a moment, ere his horse was brought,
Glorying; and in the stream beneath him, shone
Immingled with Heaven's azure waveringly,
The gay pavilion and the naked feet,
His arms, the rosy raiment, and the star.

Then she that watch'd him, 'Wherefore stare ye so?
Thou shakest in thy fear: there yet is time:
Flee down the valley before he get to horse.
Who will cry shame? Thou art not knight but knave.'

Said Gareth, 'Damsel, whether knave or knight,
Far liefer had I fight a score of times
Than hear thee so missay me and revile.
Fair words were best for him who fights for thee;
But truly foul are better, for they send
That strength of anger thro' mine arms, I know
That I shall overthrow him.'
And he that bore
The star, when mounted, cried from o'er the bridge,
'A kitchen-knave, and sent in scorn of me!
Such fight not I, but answer scorn with scorn.
For this were shame to do him further wrong
Than set him on his feet, and take his horse
And arms, and so return him to the King.
Come, therefore, leave thy lady lightly, knave.

Avoid : for it beseemeth not a knave
To ride with such a lady.'
'Dog, thou liest.
I spring from loftier lineage than thine own.'
He spake ; and all at fiery speed the two
Shock'd on the central bridge, and either spear
Bent but not brake, and either knight at once,
Hurl'd as a stone from out of a catapult
Beyond his horse's crupper and the bridge,
Fell, as if dead ; but quickly rose and drew,
And Gareth lash'd so fiercely with his brand
He drave his enemy backward down the bridge,
The damsel crying, 'Well-stricken, kitchen-knave!'
Till Gareth's shield was cloven ; but one stroke
Laid him that clove it grovelling on the ground.

Then cried the fall'n, 'Take not my life : I yield.'
And Gareth, 'So this damsel ask it of me
Good—I accord it easily as a grace.'
She reddening, 'Insolent scullion : I of thee?
I bound to thee for any favour ask'd!'
'Then shall he die.' And Gareth there unlaced
His helmet as to slay him, but she shriek'd,
'Be not so hardy, scullion, as to slay
One nobler than thyself.' 'Damsel, thy charge
Is an abounding pleasure to me. Knight,
Thy life is thine at her command. Arise
And quickly pass to Arthur's hall, and say
His kitchen-knave hath sent thee. See thou crave
His pardon for thy breaking of his laws.
Myself, when I return, will plead for thee.
Thy shield is mine—farewell ; and, damsel, thou,
Lead, and I follow.'
And fast away she fled.
Then when he came upon her, spake, 'Methought,
Knave, when I watch'd thee striking on the bridge

The savour of thy kitchen came upon me
A little faintlier: but the wind hath changed:
I scent it twenty-fold.'

. . . . . .

The second encounter—Sir Noon-Sun.

So when they touch'd the second river-loop,
Huge on a huge red horse, and all in mail
Burnish'd to blinding, shone the Noonday Sun
Beyond a raging shallow. As if the flower,
That blows a globe of after arrowlets,
Ten thousand-fold had grown, flash'd the fierce shield,
All sun; and Gareth's eyes had flying blots
Before them when he turn'd from watching him.
He from beyond the roaring shallow roar'd,
'What doest thou, brother, in my marches here?'
And she athwart the shallow shrill'd again,
'Here is a kitchen-knave from Arthur's hall
Hath overthrown thy brother, and hath his arms.'
'Ugh!' cried the Sun, and vizoring up a red
And cipher face of rounded foolishness,
Push'd horse across the foamings of the ford,
Whom Gareth met midstream: no room was there
For lance or tourney-skill: four strokes they struck
With sword, and these were mighty; the new knight
Had fear he might be shamed; but as the Sun
Heaved up a ponderous arm to strike the fifth,
The hoof of his horse slipt in the stream, the stream
Descended, and the Sun was wash'd away.

Then Gareth laid his lance athwart the ford;
So drew him home; but he that fought no more,
As being all bone-batter'd on the rock,
Yielded; and Gareth sent him to the King.
'Myself when I return will plead for thee.'
'Lead, and I follow.' Quietly she led.
'Hath not the good wind, damsel, changed again?'

'Nay, not a point: nor art thou victor here.
There lies a ridge of slate across the ford;
His horse thereon stumbled—ay, for I saw it.'

. . . . . .

The third encounter—Sir Evening-Star.

For there beyond a bridge of treble bow,
All in a rose-red from the west, and all
Naked it seem'd, and glowing in the broad
Deep-dimpled current underneath, the knight,
That named himself the Star of Evening, stood.

And Gareth, 'Wherefore waits the madman there
Naked in open dayshine?' 'Nay,' she cried,
'Not naked, only wrapt in harden'd skins
That fit him like his own; and so ye cleave
His armour off him, these will turn the blade.'

Then the third brother shouted o'er the bridge,
'O brother star, why shine ye here so low?
Thy ward is higher up: but have ye slain
The damsel's champion?' and the damsel cried,

'No star of thine, but shot from Arthur's heaven
With all disaster unto thine and thee!
For both thy younger brethren have gone down
Before this youth; and so wilt thou, Sir Star;
Art thou not old?'

'Old, damsel, old and hard,
Old, with the might and breath of twenty boys.'
Said Gareth, 'Old, and over-bold in brag!
But that same strength which threw the Morning Star
Can throw the Evening.'

Then that other blew
A hard and deadly note upon the horn.
'Approach and arm me!' With slow steps from out
An old storm-beaten, russet, many-stain'd

Pavilion, forth a grizzled damsel came,
And arm'd him in old arms, and brought a helm
With but a drying evergreen for crest,
And gave a shield whereon the Star of Even
Half-tarnish'd and half-bright, his emblem, shone.
But when it glitter'd o'er the saddle-bow,
They madly hurl'd together on the bridge;
And Gareth overthrew him, lighted, drew,
There met him drawn, and overthrew him again,
But up like fire he started: and as oft
As Gareth brought him grovelling on his knees,
So many a time he vaulted up again;
Till Gareth panted hard, and his great heart,
Foredooming all his trouble was in vain,
Labour'd within him, for he seem'd as one
That all in later, sadder age begins
To war against ill uses of a life,
But these from all his life arise, and cry,
'Thou hast made us lords, and canst not put us down!'
He half despairs; so Gareth seem'd to strike
Vainly, the damsel clamouring all the while,
'Well done, knave-knight, well stricken, O good knight-knave—
O knave, as noble as any of all the knights—
Shame me not, shame me not. I have prophesied—
Strike, thou art worthy of the Table Round—
His arms are old, he trusts the harden'd skin—
Strike—strike—the wind will never change again.'
And Gareth hearing ever stronglier smote,
And hew'd great pieces of his armour off him,
But lash'd in vain against the harden'd skin,
And could not wholly bring him under, more
Than loud Southwesterns, rolling ridge on ridge,
The buoy that rides at sea, and dips and springs
For ever; till at length Sir Gareth's brand
Clash'd his, and brake it utterly to the hilt.

I have thee now ;' but forth that other sprang,
And, all unknightlike, writhed his wiry arms
Around him, till he felt, despite his mail,
Strangled, but straining ev'n his uttermost
Cast, and so hurl'd him headlong o'er the bridge
Down to the river, sink or swim, and cried,
'Lead, and I follow.'

But the damsel said,
'I lead no longer ; ride thou at my side ;
Thou art the kingliest of all kitchen-knaves.

. . . . . .

Lancelot follows Gareth and overthrows him.

Sir Lancelot, having swum the river-loops—
His blue shield-lions cover'd—softly drew
Behind the twain, and when he saw the star
Gleam, on Sir Gareth's turning to him, cried,
'Stay, felon knight, I avenge me for my friend.'
And Gareth crying prick'd against the cry ;
But when they closed—in a moment—at one touch
Of that skill'd spear, the wonder of the world—
Went sliding down so easily, and fell,
That when he found the grass within his hands
He laugh'd ; the laughter jarr'd upon Lynette :
Harshly she ask'd him, 'Shamed and overthrown,
And tumbled back into the kitchen-knave,
Why laugh ye ? that ye blew your boast in vain ?'
'Nay, noble damsel, but that I, the son
Of old King Lot and good Queen Bellicent,
And victor of the bridges and the ford,
And knight of Arthur, here lie thrown by whom
I know not, all thro' mere unhappiness—
Device and sorcery and unhappiness—
Out, sword ; we are thrown !' And Lancelot answer'd,
'Prince,

O Gareth—thro' the mere unhappiness
Of one who came to help thee, not to harm,
Lancelot, and all as glad to find thee whole
As on the day when Arthur knighted him.'

Then Gareth, 'Thou—Lancelot!—thine the hand
That threw me? An some chance to mar the boast
Thy brethren of thee make—which could not chance—
Had sent thee down before a lesser spear,
Shamed had I been, and sad—O Lancelot—thou!'

Whereat the maiden, petulant, 'Lancelot,
Why came ye not, when call'd? and wherefore now
Come ye, not call'd? I gloried in my knave,
Who being still rebuked, would answer still
Courteous as any knight—but now, if knight,
The marvel dies, and leaves me fool'd and trick'd,
And only wondering wherefore play'd upon:
And doubtful whether I and mine be scorn'd.
Where should be truth if not in Arthur's hall,
In Arthur's presence? Knight, knave, prince and fool
I hate thee and for ever.'

And Lancelot said,
'Blessed be thou, Sir Gareth! knight art thou
To the King's best wish. O damsel, be you wise
To call him shamed, who is but overthrown?
Thrown have I been, nor once, but many a time.
Victor from vanquish'd issues at the last,
And overthrower from being overthrown.
With sword we have not striven; and thy good horse
And thou art weary; yet not less I felt
Thy manhood thro' that weary lance of thine.
Well hast thou done; for all the stream is freed,
And thou hast wreak'd his justice on his foes,
And when reviled, hast answer'd graciously,

And makest merry when overthrown. Prince, Knight,
Hail, Knight and Prince, and of our Table Round!'

And then when turning to Lynette he told
The tale of Gareth, petulantly she said,
'Ay well—ay well—for worse than being fool'd
Of others, is to fool one's self. A cave,
Sir Lancelot, is hard by, with meats and drinks
And forage for the horse, and flint for fire.
But all about it flies a honeysuckle.
Seek, till we find.' And when they sought and found,
Sir Gareth drank and ate, and all his life
Past into sleep; on whom the maiden gazed.
'Sound sleep be thine! sound cause to sleep hast thou.
Wake lusty! Seem I not as tender to him
As any mother? Ay, but such a one
As all day long hath rated at her child,
And vext his day, but blesses him asleep—
Good lord, how sweetly smells the honeysuckle
In the hush'd night, as if the world were one
Of utter peace, and love, and gentleness!
O Lancelot, Lancelot'—and she clapt her hands—
'Full merry am I to find my goodly knave
Is knight and noble. See now, sworn have I,
Else yon black felon had not let me pass,
To bring thee back to do the battle with him.
Thus an thou goest, he will fight thee first;
Who doubts thee victor? so will my knight-knave
Miss the full flower of this accomplishment.'

Said Lancelot, 'Peradventure he, you name,
May know my shield. Let Gareth, an he will,
Change his for mine, and take my charger, fresh,
Not to be spurr'd, loving the battle as well
As he that rides him.' 'Lancelot-like,' she said,
'Courteous in this, Lord Lancelot, as in all.'

. . . . . .

Lancelot, Gareth, and Lynette ride on to the fourth encounter.

Then for a space, and under cloud that grew
To thunder-gloom palling all stars, they rode
In converse till she made her palfrey halt,
Lifted an arm, and softly whisper'd, 'There.'
And all the three were silent seeing, pitch'd
Beside the Castle Perilous on flat field,
A huge pavilion like a mountain peak
Sunder the glooming crimson on the marge,
Black, with black banner, and a long black horn
Beside it hanging ; which Sir Gareth graspt,
And so, before the two could hinder him,
Sent all his heart and breath thro' all the horn.
Echo'd the walls ; a light twinkled ; anon
Came lights and lights, and once again he blew ;
Whereon were hollow tramplings up and down
And muffled voices heard, and shadows past ;
Till high above him, circled with her maids,
The Lady Lyonors at a window stood,
Beautiful among lights, and waving to him
White hands, and courtesy ; but when the Prince
Three times had blown—after long hush—at last—
The huge pavilion slowly yielded up,
Thro' those black foldings, that which housed therein.
High on a nightblack horse, in nightblack arms,
With white breast-bone, and barren ribs of Death,
And crown'd with fleshless laughter—some ten steps—
In the half-light—thro' the dim dawn—advanced
The monster, and then paused, and spake no word.

But Gareth spake and all indignantly,
'Fool, for thou hast, men say, the strength of ten,
Canst thou not trust the limbs thy God hath given,
But must, to make the terror of thee more,
Trick thyself out in ghastly imageries

Of that which Life hath done with, and the clod,
Less dull than thou, will hide with mantling flowers
As if for pity ?' But he spake no word ;
Which set the horror higher : a maiden swoon'd ;
The Lady Lyonors wrung her hands and wept,
As doom'd to be the bride of Night and Death ;
Sir Gareth's head prickled beneath his helm ;
And ev'n Sir Lancelot thro' his warm blood felt
Ice strike, and all that mark'd him were aghast.

At once Sir Lancelot's charger fiercely neigh'd,
And Death's dark war-horse bounded forward with him.
Then those that did not blink the terror, saw
That Death was cast to ground, and slowly rose.
But with one stroke Sir Gareth split the skull.
Half fell to right and half to left and lay.
Then with a stronger buffet he clove the helm
As throughly as the skull ; and out from this
Issued the bright face of a blooming boy
Fresh as a flower new-born, and crying, 'Knight,
Slay me not : my three brethren bad me do it,
To make a horror all about the house,
And stay the world from Lady Lyonors.
They never dream'd the passes would be past.'
Answer'd Sir Gareth graciously to one
Not many a moon his younger, 'My fair child,
What madness made thee challenge the chief knight
Of Arthur's hall ?' 'Fair Sir, they bad me do it.
They hate the King, and Lancelot, the King's friend,
They hoped to slay him somewhere on the stream,
They never dream'd the passes could be past.'

Then sprang the happier day from underground ;
And Lady Lyonors and her house, with dance
And revel and song, made merry over Death,
As being after all their foolish fears

And horrors only proven a blooming boy.
So large mirth lived and Gareth won the quest.

And he that told the tale in older times
Says that Sir Gareth wedded Lyonors,
But he, that told it later, says Lynette.

XXII

THE HOLY GRAIL

1870

From noiseful arms, and acts of prowess done
In tournament or tilt, Sir Percivale,
Whom Arthur and his knighthood call'd The Pure,
Had pass'd into the silent life of prayer,
Praise, fast, and alms; and leaving for the cowl
The helmet in an abbey far away
From Camelot, there, and not long after, died.

And one, a fellow-monk among the rest,
Ambrosius, loved him much beyond the rest,
And honour'd him, and wrought into his heart
A way by love that waken'd love within,
To answer that which came: and as they sat
Beneath a world-old yew-tree, darkening half
The cloisters, on a gustful April morn
That puff'd the swaying branches into smoke
Above them, ere the summer when he died,
The monk Ambrosius question'd Percivale:

'O brother, I have seen this yew-tree smoke,
Spring after spring, for half a hundred years:
For never have I known the world without,
Nor ever stray'd beyond the pale: but thee,
When first thou camest—such a courtesy

Spake thro' the limbs and in the voice—I knew
For one of those who eat in Arthur's hall;
For good ye are and bad, and like to coins,
Some true, some light, but every one of you
Stamp'd with the image of the King; and now
Tell me, what drove thee from the Table Round,
My brother? was it earthly passion crost?'

'Nay,' said the knight; 'for no such passion mine.
But the sweet vision of the Holy Grail
Drove me from all vainglories, rivalries,
And earthly heats that spring and sparkle out
Among us in the jousts, while women watch
Who wins, who falls; and waste the spiritual strength
Within us, better offer'd up to Heaven.'

To whom the monk: 'The Holy Grail!—I trust
We are green in Heaven's eyes; but here too much
We moulder—as to things without I mean—
Yet one of your own knights, a guest of ours,
Told us of this in our refectory,
But spake with such a sadness and so low
We heard not half of what he said. What is it?
The phantom of a cup that comes and goes?'

'Nay, monk! what phantom?' answer'd Percivale.
'The cup, the cup itself, from which our Lord
Drank at the last sad supper with his own.
This, from the blessed land of Aromat—
After the day of darkness, when the dead
Went wandering o'er Moriah—the good saint
Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought
To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord.
And there awhile it bode; and if a man
Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at once,
By faith, of all his ills. But then the times

Grew to such evil that the holy cup
Was caught away to Heaven, and disappear'd.'

To whom the monk : 'From our old books I know
That Joseph came of old to Glastonbury,
And there the heathen Prince, Arviragus,
Gave him an isle of marsh whereon to build ;
And there he built with wattles from the marsh
A little lonely church in days of yore,
For so they say, these books of ours, but seem
Mute of this miracle, far as I have read.
But who first saw the holy thing to-day ?'

'A woman,' answer'd Percivale, 'a nun,
And one no further off in blood from me
Than sister ; and if ever holy maid
With knees of adoration wore the stone,
A holy maid ; tho' never maiden glow'd,
But that was in her earlier maidenhood,
With such a fervent flame of human love,
Which being rudely blunted, glanced and shot
Only to holy things ; to prayer and praise
She gave herself, to fast and alms. And yet,
Nun as she was, the scandal of the Court,
Sin against Arthur and the Table Round,
And the strange sound of an adulterous race,
Across the iron grating of her cell
Beat, and she pray'd and fasted all the more.

'And he to whom she told her sins, or what
Her all but utter whiteness held for sin,
A man wellnigh a hundred winters old,
Spake often with her of the Holy Grail,
A legend handed down thro' five or six,
And each of these a hundred winters old,
From our Lord's time. And when King Arthur made
His Table Round, and all men's hearts became

Clean for a season, surely he had thought
That now the Holy Grail would come again ;
But sin broke out. Ah, Christ, that it would come,
And heal the world of all their wickedness !
"O Father !" ask'd the maiden, "might it come
To me by prayer and fasting ?" "Nay," said he,
"I know not, for thy heart is pure as snow."
And so she pray'd and fasted, till the sun
Shone, and the wind blew, thro' her, and I thought
She might have risen and floated when I saw her.

'For on a day she sent to speak with me.
And when she came to speak, behold her eyes
Beyond my knowing of them, beautiful,
Beyond all knowing of them, wonderful,
Beautiful in the light of holiness.
And "O my brother Percivale," she said,
"Sweet brother, I have seen the Holy Grail :
For, waked at dead of night, I heard a sound
As of a silver horn from o'er the hills
Blown, and I thought, 'It is not Arthur's use
To hunt by moonlight ;' and the slender sound
As from a distance beyond distance grew
Coming upon me—O never harp nor horn,
Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch with hand,
Was like that music as it came ; and then
Stream'd thro' my cell a cold and silver beam,
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,
Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive,
Till all the white walls of my cell were dyed
With rosy colours leaping on the wall ;
And then the music faded, and the Grail
Past, and the beam decay'd, and from the walls
The rosy quiverings died into the night.
So now the Holy Thing is here again
Among us, brother, fast thou too and pray,

And tell thy brother knights to fast and pray,
That so perchance the vision may be seen
By thee and those, and all the world be heal'd."

'Then leaving the pale nun, I spake of this
To all men; and myself fasted and pray'd
Always, and many among us many a week
Fasted and pray'd even to the uttermost,
Expectant of the wonder that would be.

'And one there was among us, ever moved
Among us in white armour, Galahad.
"God make thee good as thou art beautiful,"
Said Arthur, when he dubb'd him knight; and none,
In so young youth, was ever made a knight
Till Galahad; and this Galahad, when he heard
My sister's vision, fill'd me with amaze;
His eyes became so like her own, they seem'd
Hers, and himself her brother more than I.

. . . . . .

'Then on a summer night it came to pass,
While the great banquet lay along the hall,
That Galahad would sit down in Merlin's chair.

'And all at once, as there we sat, we heard
A cracking and a riving of the roofs,
And rending, and a blast, and overhead
Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.
And in the blast there smote along the hall
A beam of light seven times more clear than day:
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail
All over cover'd with a luminous cloud,
And none might see who bare it, and it past.
But every knight beheld his fellow's face
As in a glory, and all the knights arose,
And staring each at other like dumb men
Stood, till I found a voice and sware a vow.

'I sware a vow before them all, that I,
Because I had not seen the Grail, would ride
A twelvemonth and a day in quest of it,
Until I found and saw it, as the nun
My sister saw it; and Galahad sware the vow,
And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot's cousin, sware,
And Lancelot sware, and many among the knights,
And Gawain sware, and louder than the rest.'

Then spake the monk Ambrosius, asking him,
'What said the King? Did Arthur take the vow?'

. . . . . .

'O brother, when I told him what had chanced,
My sister's vision, and the rest, his face
Darken'd, as I have seen it more than once,
When some brave deed seem'd to be done in vain,
Darken; and "Woe is me, my knights," he cried,
"Had I been here, ye had not sworn the vow."
Bold was mine answer, "Had thyself been here,
My King, thou wouldst have sworn." "Yea, yea," said he,
"Art thou so bold and hast not seen the Grail?"

'"Nay, lord, I heard the sound, I saw the light,
But since I did not see the Holy Thing,
I sware a vow to follow it till I saw."

'Then when he ask'd us, knight by knight, if any
Had seen it, all their answers were as one:
"Nay, lord, and therefore have we sworn our vows."

'"Lo now," said Arthur, "have ye seen a cloud?
What go ye into the wilderness to see?"

'Then Galahad on the sudden, and in a voice
Shrilling along the hall to Arthur, call'd,
"But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail,
I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry—
'O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me.'

'"Ah, Galahad, Galahad," said the King, "for such
As thou art is the vision, not for these.
Thy holy nun and thou have seen a sign—
Holier is none, my Percivale, than she—
A sign to maim this Order which I made.
But ye, that follow but the leader's bell"
(Brother, the King was hard upon his knights)
"Taliessin is our fullest throat of song,
And one hath sung and all the dumb will sing.
Lancelot is Lancelot, and hath overborne
Five knights at once, and every younger knight,
Unproven, holds himself as Lancelot,
Till overborne by one, he learns—and ye,
What are ye? Galahads?—no, nor Percivales"
(For thus it pleased the King to range me close
After Sir Galahad); "nay," said he, "but men
With strength and will to right the wrong'd, of power
To lay the sudden heads of violence flat,
Knights that in twelve great battles splash'd and dyed
The strong White Horse in his own heathen blood—
But one hath seen, and all the blind will see.
Go, since your vows are sacred, being made:
Yet—for ye know the cries of all my realm
Pass thro' this hall—how often, O my knights,
Your places being vacant at my side,
This chance of noble deeds will come and go
Unchallenged, while ye follow wandering fires
Lost in the quagmire! Many of you, yea most,
Return no more: ye think I show myself
Too dark a prophet: come now, let us meet
The morrow morn once more in one full field
Of gracious pastime, that once more the King,
Before ye leave him for this Quest, may count
The yet-unbroken strength of all his knights,
Rejoicing in that Order which he made."

'So when the sun broke next from under ground,
All the great table of our Arthur closed
And clash'd in such a tourney and so full,
So many lances broken—never yet
Had Camelot seen the like, since Arthur came ;
And I myself and Galahad, for a strength
Was in us from the vision, overthrew
So many knights that all the people cried,
And almost burst the barriers in their heat,
Shouting, "Sir Galahad and Sir Percivale !"

'But when the next day brake from under ground—
O brother, had you known our Camelot,
Built by old kings, age after age, so old
The King himself had fears that it would fall,
So strange, and rich, and dim ; for where the roofs
Totter'd toward each other in the sky,
Met foreheads all along the street of those
Who watch'd us pass ; and lower, and where the long
Rich galleries, lady-laden, weigh'd the necks
Of dragons clinging to the crazy walls,
Thicker than drops from thunder, showers of flowers
Fell as we past ; and men and boys astride
On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan,
At all the corners, named us each by name,
Calling "God speed !" but in the ways below
The knights and ladies wept, and rich and poor
Wept, and the King himself could hardly speak
For grief, and all in middle street the Queen,
Who rode by Lancelot, wail'd and shriek'd aloud,
"This madness has come on us for our sins."
So to the Gate of the three Queens we came,
Where Arthur's wars are render'd mystically,
And thence departed every one his way.

'And I was lifted up in heart, and thought
Of all my late-shown prowess in the lists,

How my strong lance had beaten down the knights,
So many and famous names ; and never yet
Had heaven appear'd so blue, nor earth so green,
For all my blood danced in me, and I knew
That I should light upon the Holy Grail.

'Thereafter, the dark warning of our King,
That most of us would follow wandering fires,
Came like a driving gloom across my mind.
Then every evil word I had spoken once,
And every evil thought I had thought of old,
And every evil deed I ever did,
Awoke and cried, "This Quest is not for thee."
And lifting up mine eyes, I found myself
Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns,
And I was thirsty even unto death ;
And I, too, cried, "This Quest is not for thee."

'And on I rode, and when I thought my thirst
Would slay me, saw deep lawns, and then a brook,
With one sharp rapid, where the crisping white
Play'd ever back upon the sloping wave,
And took both ear and eye ; and o'er the brook
Were apple-trees, and apples by the brook
Fallen, and on the lawns. "I will rest here,"
I said, "I am not worthy of the Quest ;"
But even while I drank the brook, and ate
The goodly apples, all these things at once
Fell into dust, and I was left alone,
And thirsting, in a land of sand and thorns.

'And then behold a woman at a door
Spinning ; and fair the house whereby she sat,
And kind the woman's eyes and innocent,
And all her bearing gracious ; and she rose
Opening her arms to meet me, as who should say,
"Rest here ;" but when I touch'd her, lo ! she, too,

Fell into dust and nothing, and the house
Became no better than a broken shed,
And in it a dead babe ; and also this
Fell into dust, and I was left alone.

'And on I rode, and greater was my thirst.
Then flash'd a yellow gleam across the world,
And where it smote the plowshare in the field,
The plowman left his plowing, and fell down
Before it ; where it glitter'd on her pail,
The milkmaid left her milking, and fell down
Before it, and I knew not why, but thought
"The sun is rising," tho' the sun had risen.
Then was I ware of one that on me moved
In golden armour with a crown of gold
About a casque all jewels ; and his horse
In golden armour jewell'd everywhere :
And on the splendour came, flashing me blind ;
And seem'd to me the Lord of all the world,
Being so huge. But when I thought he meant
To crush me, moving on me, lo ! he, too,
Open'd his arms to embrace me as he came,
And up I went and touch'd him, and he, too,
Fell into dust, and I was left alone
And wearying in a land of sand and thorns.

'And I rode on and found a mighty hill,
And on the top, a city wall'd : the spires
Prick'd with incredible pinnacles into heaven.
And by the gateway stirr'd a crowd ; and these
Cried to me climbing, "Welcome, Percivale !
Thou mightiest and thou purest among men !"
And glad was I and clomb, but found at top
No man, nor any voice. And thence I past
Far thro' a ruinous city, and I saw
That man had once dwelt there ; but there I found

Only one man of an exceeding age.
"Where is that goodly company," said I,
"That so cried out upon me?" and he had
Scarce any voice to answer, and yet gasp'd,
"Whence and what art thou?" and even as he spoke
Fell into dust, and disappear'd, and I
Was left alone once more, and cried in grief,
"Lo, if I find the Holy Grail itself
And touch it, it will crumble into dust."

'And thence I dropt into a lowly vale,
Low as the hill was high, and where the vale
Was lowest, found a chapel, and thereby
A holy hermit in a hermitage,
To whom I told my phantoms, and he said:

'"O son, thou hast not true humility,
The highest virtue, mother of them all;
For when the Lord of all things made Himself
Naked of glory for His mortal change,
'Take thou my robe,' she said, 'for all is thine,'
And all her form shone forth with sudden light
So that the angels were amazed, and she
Follow'd Him down, and like a flying star
Led on the grey-hair'd wisdom of the east;
But her thou hast not known: for what is this
Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy sins?
Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself
As Galahad." When the hermit made an end,
In silver armour suddenly Galahad shone
Before us, and against the chapel door
Laid lance, and enter'd, and we knelt in prayer.
And there the hermit slaked my burning thirst,
And at the sacring of the mass I saw
The holy elements alone; but he,
"Saw ye no more? I, Galahad, saw the Grail,

The Holy Grail, descend upon the shrine:
I saw the fiery face as of a child
That smote itself into the bread, and went;
And hither am I come; and never yet
Hath what thy sister taught me first to see,
This Holy Thing, fail'd from my side, nor come
Cover'd, but moving with me night and day,
Fainter by day, but always in the night
Blood-red, and sliding down the blacken'd marsh
Blood-red, and on the naked mountain top
Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below
Blood-red. And in the strength of this I rode,
Shattering all evil customs everywhere,
And past thro' Pagan realms, and made them mine,
And clash'd with Pagan hordes, and bore them down,
And broke thro' all, and in the strength of this
Come victor. But my time is hard at hand,
And hence I go; and one will crown me king
Far in the spiritual city; and come thou, too,
For thou shalt see the vision when I go."

'While thus he spake, his eye, dwelling on mine,
Drew me, with power upon me, till I grew
One with him, to believe as he believed.
Then, when the day began to wane, we went.

'There rose a hill that none but man could climb,
Scarr'd with a hundred wintry watercourses—
Storm at the top, and when we gain'd it, storm
Round us and death; for every moment glanced
His silver arms and gloom'd: so quick and thick
The lightnings here and there to left and right
Struck, till the dry old trunks about us, dead,
Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death,
Sprang into fire: and at the base we found
On either hand, as far as eye could see,

A great black swamp and of an evil smell,
Part black, part whiten'd with the bones of men,
Not to be crost, save that some ancient king
Had built a way, where, link'd with many a bridge,
A thousand piers ran into the great Sea.
And Galahad fled along them bridge by bridge,
And every bridge as quickly as he crost
Sprang into fire and vanish'd, tho' I yearn'd
To follow; and thrice above him all the heavens
Open'd and blazed with thunder such as seem'd
Shoutings of all the sons of God: and first
At once I saw him far on the great Sea,
In silver-shining armour starry-clear;
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud.
And with exceeding swiftness ran the boat,
If boat it were—I saw not whence it came.
And when the heavens open'd and blazed again
Roaring, I saw him like a silver star—
And had he set the sail, or had the boat
Become a living creature clad with wings?
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Redder than any rose, a joy to me,
For now I knew the veil had been withdrawn.
Then in a moment when they blazed again
Opening, I saw the least of little stars
Down on the waste, and straight beyond the star
I saw the spiritual city and all her spires
And gateways in a glory like one pearl—
No larger, tho' the goal of all the saints—
Strike from the sea; and from the star there shot
A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there
Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail,
Which never eyes on earth again shall see.
Then fell the floods of heaven drowning the deep
And how my feet recrost the deathful ridge

No memory in me lives ; but that I touch'd
The chapel-doors at dawn I know ; and thence
Taking my war-horse from the holy man,
Glad that no phantom vext me more, return'd
To whence I came, the gate of Arthur's wars.'

XXIII

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

1870

That story which the bold Sir Bedivere,
First made and latest left of all the knights,
Told, when the man was no more than a voice
In the white winter of his age, to those
With whom he dwelt, new faces, other minds.

For on their march to westward, Bedivere,
Who slowly paced among the slumbering host,
Heard in his tent the moanings of the King :

'I found Him in the shining of the stars,
I mark'd Him in the flowering of His fields,
But in His ways with men I find Him not.
I waged His wars, and now I pass and die.
O me ! for why is all around us here
As if some lesser god had made the world,
But had not force to shape it as he would,
Till the High God behold it from beyond,
And enter it, and make it beautiful ?
Or else as if the world were wholly fair,
But that these eyes of men are dense and dim,
And have not power to see it as it is :
Perchance, because we see not to the close ;—
For I, being simple, thought to work His will,
And have but stricken with the sword in vain ;

And all whereon I lean'd in wife and friend
Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm
Reels back into the beast, and is no more.
My God, thou hast forgotten me in my death :
Nay—God my Christ—I pass but shall not die.'

. . . . . .

Then rose the King and moved his host by night,
And ever push'd Sir Modred, league by league,
Back to the sunset bound of Lyonnesse—
A land of old upheaven from the abyss
By fire, to sink into the abyss again ;
Where fragments of forgotten peoples dwelt,
And the long mountains ended in a coast
Of ever-shifting sand, and far away
The phantom circle of a moaning sea.
There the pursuer could pursue no more,
And he that fled no further fly the King ;
And there, that day when the great light of heaven
Burn'd at his lowest in the rolling year,
On the waste sand by the waste sea they closed.
Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight
Like this last, dim, weird battle of the west.
A deathwhite mist slept over sand and sea :
Whereof the chill, to him who breathed it, drew
Down with his blood, till all his heart was cold
With formless fear ; and ev'n on Arthur fell
Confusion, since he saw not whom he fought.
For friend and foe were shadows in the mist,
And friend slew friend not knowing whom he slew ;
And some had visions out of golden youth,
And some beheld the faces of old ghosts
Look in upon the battle ; and in the mist
Was many a noble deed, many a base,
And chance and craft and strength in single fights,
And ever and anon with host to host
Shocks, and the splintering spear, the hard mail hewn,

Shield-breakings, and the clash of brands, the crash
Of battleaxes on shatter'd helms, and shrieks
After the Christ, of those who falling down
Look'd up for heaven, and only saw the mist;
And shouts of heathen and the traitor knights,
Oaths, insult, filth, and monstrous blasphemies,
Sweat, writhings, anguish, labouring of the lungs
In that close mist, and cryings for the light,
Moans of the dying, and voices of the dead.

Last, as by some one deathbed after wail
Of suffering, silence follows, or thro' death
Or deathlike swoon, thus over all that shore,
Save for some whisper of the seething seas,
A dead hush fell; but when the dolorous day
Grew drearier toward twilight falling, came
A bitter wind, clear from the North, and blew
The mist aside, and with that wind the tide
Rose, and the pale King glanced across the field
Of battle: but no man was moving there;
Nor any cry of Christian heard thereon,
Nor yet of heathen; only the wan wave
Brake in among dead faces, to and fro
Swaying the helpless hands, and up and down
Tumbling the hollow helmets of the fallen,
And shiver'd brands that once had fought with Rome,
And rolling far along the gloomy shores
The voice of days of old and days to be.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere,
And whiter than the mist that all day long
Had held the field of battle was the King:
'Hearest thou this great voice that shakes the world,
And wastes the narrow realm whereon we move,
And beats upon the faces of the dead,
My dead, as tho' they had not died for me?—
O Bedivere, for on my heart hath fall'n

Confusion, till I know not what I am,
Nor whence I am, nor whether I be King.
Behold, I seem but King among the dead.'

Then spake the bold Sir Bedivere: 'My King,
King everywhere! and so the dead have kings,
There also will I worship thee as King.
Yet still thy life is whole, and still I live
Who love thee; but who hates thee, he that brought
The heathen back among us, yonder stands,
Modred, unharm'd, the traitor of thine house.'

Then spake the King: 'My house hath been my doom.
But call not thou this traitor of my house
Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with me.
My house are rather they who sware my vows,
Yea, even while they brake them, own'd me King
And well for thee, saying in my dark hour,
When all the purport of my throne hath fail'd,
That quick or dead thou holdest me for King.
King am I, whatsoever be their cry;
And one last act of kinghood shalt thou see
Yet, ere I pass.' And uttering this the King
Made at the man: then Modred smote his liege
Hard on that helm which many a heathen sword
Had beaten thin; while Arthur at one blow,
Striking the last stroke with Excalibur,
Slew him, and all but slain himself, he fell.

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea;
Until King Arthur's Table, man by man,
Had fall'n in Lyonnesse about their lord,
King Arthur. Then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,

That stood on a dark strait of barren land :
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere ;
'The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more ; but, let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride : for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king ;
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known :
But now delay not : take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere :
Watch what thou seëst, and lightly bring me word.'

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere :
'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm—
A little thing may harm a wounded man ;
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.'

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept,
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt:
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw: but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
'Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag.'

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:
'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
Thy fëalty, nor like a noble knight:
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.

Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again,
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.'

Then went Sir Bedivère the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud:

'And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done?
What harm, undone? Deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt? But were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, "King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour and much fame were lost.'

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily :
'What is it thou hast seen ? or what hast heard ?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
'I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath :
'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted ! Woe is me !
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt ;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence :
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush beds, and clutch'd the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the Northern Sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur :
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath :
'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out : what is it thou hast heard, or seen ?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere :
'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him ;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard :
'My end draws nigh ; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin ; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.'

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remórsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words ;
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, 'Quick, quick !
I fear it is too late, and I shall die.'

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.
Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels—
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware
That all the decks were dense with stately forms,
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold: and from them rose
A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in the barge.'
So to the barge they came. There those three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud
And dropping bitter tears against a brow
Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white,
And colourless, and like the wither'd moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;
And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops

Of onset ; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the daïs-throne—were parch'd with dust ;
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shatter'd column lay the King ;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere :
'Ah ! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go ?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes ?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole Round Table is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world,
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds.'

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the barge :
'The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
Comfort thyself : what comfort is in me ?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within himself make pure ! but thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats

That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seëst—if indeed I go
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)—
To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly: but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.'

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

But when that moan had past for evermore,
The stillness of the dead world's winter dawn
Amazed him, and he groan'd, 'The King is gone.'
And therewithal came on him the weird rhyme,
'From the great deep to the great deep he goes.'

Whereat he slowly turn'd and slowly clomb
The last hard footstep of that iron crag;
Thence mark'd the black hull moving yet, and cried,
'He passes to be King among the dead,
And after healing of his grievous wound
He comes again; but—if he come no more—
O me, be yon dark Queens in yon black boat,

Who shriek'd and wail'd, the three whereat we gazed
On that high day, when, clothed with living light,
They stood before his throne in silence, friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need?'

Then from the dawn it seem'd there came, but faint
As from beyond the limit of the world,
Like the last echo born of a great cry,
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice
Around a king returning from his wars.

Thereat once more he moved about, and clomb
Ev'n to the highest he could climb, and saw,
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,
Or thought he saw, the speck that bare the King,
Down that long water opening on the deep
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go
From less to less and vanish into light.
And the new sun rose bringing the new year.

XXIV

CRANMER'S SPEECH

(From Queen Mary, Act IV. Scene III.)

1875

Good people, every man at time of death
Would fain set forth some saying that may live
After his death and better humankind;
For death gives life's last word a power to live,
And, like the stone-cut epitaph, remain
After the vanish'd voice, and speak to men.
God grant me grace to glorify my God!
And first I say it is a grievous case,
Many so dote upon this bubble world,

Whose colours in a moment break and fly,
They care for nothing else. What saith St. John :—
'Love of this world is hatred against God.'
Again, I pray you all that, next to God,
You do unmurmuringly and willingly
Obey your King and Queen, and not for dread
Of these alone, but from the fear of Him
Whose ministers they be to govern you.
Thirdly, I pray you all to live together
Like brethren ; yet what hatred Christian men
Bear to each other, seeming not as brethren,
But mortal foes ! But do you good to all
As much as in you lieth. Hurt no man more
Than you would harm your loving natural brother
Of the same roof, same breast. If any do,
Albeit he think himself at home with God,
Of this be sure, he is whole worlds away.
Protestant murmurs. What sort of brothers then be those that lust
To burn each other ?
Williams. Peace among you, there !
Cranmer. Fourthly, to those that own exceeding wealth,
Remember that sore saying spoken once
By Him that was the truth, 'How hard it is
For the rich man to enter into Heaven ;'
Let all rich men remember that hard word.
I have not time for more : if ever, now
Let them flow forth in charity, seeing now
The poor so many, and all food so dear.
Long have I lain in prison, yet have heard
Of all their wretchedness. Give to the poor,
Ye give to God. He is with us in the poor.

XXV

THE REVENGE

A Ballad of the Fleet

1880

I

At Flores in the Azores Sir Richard Grenville lay,
And a pinnace, like a flutter'd bird, came flying from far away:
'Spanish ships of war at sea! we have sighted fifty-three!'
Then sware Lord Thomas Howard: ''Fore God I am no coward;
But I cannot meet them here, for my ships are out of gear,
And the half my men are sick. I must fly, but follow quick.
We are six ships of the line; can we fight with fifty-three?'

II

Then spake Sir Richard Grenville: 'I know you are no coward;
You fly them for a moment to fight with them again.
But I've ninety men and more that are lying sick ashore.
I should count myself the coward if I left them, my Lord Howard,
To these Inquisition dogs and the devildoms of Spain.'

III

So Lord Howard past away with five ships of war that day,
Till he melted like a cloud in the silent summer heaven;
But Sir Richard bore in hand all his sick men from the land
Very carefully and slow,
Men of Bideford in Devon,
And we laid them on the ballast down below;
For we brought them all aboard,
And they blest him in their pain, that they were not left to Spain,
To the thumbscrew and the stake, for the glory of the Lord.

IV

He had only a hundred seamen to work the ship and to fight,
And he sailed away from Flores till the Spaniard came in sight,
With his huge sea-castles heaving upon the weather bow.
'Shall we fight or shall we fly?
Good Sir Richard, tell us now,
For to fight is but to die!
There'll be little of us left by the time this sun be set.'
And Sir Richard said again: 'We be all good English men.
Let us bang these dogs of Seville, the children of the devil,
For I never turn'd my back upon Don or devil yet.'

V

Sir Richard spoke and he laugh'd, and we roar'd a hurrah, and so
The little Revenge ran on sheer into the heart of the foe,
With her hundred fighters on deck, and her ninety sick below;
For half of their fleet to the right and half to the left were seen,
And the little Revenge ran on thro' the long sea-lane between.

VI

Thousands of their soldiers look'd down from their decks and laugh'd,
Thousands of their seamen made mock at the mad little craft
Running on and on, till delay'd
By their mountain-like San Philip that, of fifteen hundred tons,
And up-shadowing high above us with her yawning tiers of guns,
Took the breath from our sails, and we stay'd.

VII

And while now the great San Philip hung above us like a cloud
Whence the thunderbolt will fall
Long and loud,
Four galleons drew away
From the Spanish fleet that day,
And two upon the larboard and two upon the starboard lay,
And the battle-thunder broke from them all.

VIII

But anon the great San Philip, she bethought herself and went
Having that within her womb that had left her ill content;
And the rest they came aboard us, and they fought us hand to hand,
For a dozen times they came with their pikes and musqueteers,
And a dozen times we shook 'em off as a dog that shakes his ears
When he leaps from the water to the land.

IX

And the sun went down, and the stars came out far over the summer sea,
But never a moment ceased the fight of the one and the fifty-three.
Ship after ship, the whole night long, their high-built galleons came,
Ship after ship, the whole night long, with her battle-thunder and flame;
Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew back with her dead and her shame.
For some were sunk and many were shatter'd, and so could fight us no more—
God of battles, was ever a battle like this in the world before?

x

For he said 'Fight on! fight on!
Tho' his vessel was all but a wreck;
And it chanced that, when half of the short summer night was gone,
With a grisly wound to be drest he had left the deck,
But a bullet struck him that was dressing it suddenly dead,
And himself he was wounded again in the side and the head,
And he said 'Fight on! fight on!'

xi

And the night went down, and the sun smiled out far over the summer sea,
And the Spanish fleet with broken sides lay round us all in a ring;
But they dared not touch us again, for they fear'd that we still could sting,
So they watch'd what the end would be.
And we had not fought them in vain,
But in perilous plight were we,
Seeing forty of our poor hundred were slain,
And half of the rest of us maim'd for life
In the crash of the cannonades and the desperate strife;
And the sick men down in the hold were most of them stark and cold,
And the pikes were all broken or bent, and the powder was all of it spent;
And the masts and the rigging were lying over the side;
But Sir Richard cried in his English pride,
'We have fought such a fight for a day and a night
As may never be fought again!
We have won great glory, my men!
And a day less or more
At sea or ashore,
We die—does it matter when?

Sink me the ship, Master Gunner—sink her, split her in twain!
Fall into the hands of God, not into the hands of Spain!'

XII

And the gunner said 'Ay, ay,' but the seamen made reply:
'We have children, we have wives,
And the Lord hath spared our lives.
We will make the Spaniard promise, if we yield, to let us go;
We shall live to fight again and to strike another blow.'
And the lion there lay dying, and they yielded to the foe.

XIII

And the stately Spanish men to their flagship bore him then,
Where they laid him by the mast, old Sir Richard caught at last,
And they praised him to his face with their courtly foreign grace;
But he rose upon their decks, and he cried:
'I have fought for Queen and Faith like a valiant man and true;
I have only done my duty as a man is bound to do:
With a joyful spirit I Sir Richard Grenville die!'
And he fell upon their decks, and he died.

XIV

And they stared at the dead that had been so valiant and true,
And had holden the power and glory of Spain so cheap
That he dared her with one little ship and his English few;
Was he devil or man? He was devil for aught they knew,
But they sank his body with honour down into the deep,
And they mann'd the Revenge with a swarthier alien crew,
And away she sail'd with her loss and long'd for her own;
When a wind from the lands they had ruin'd awoke from sleep,
And the water began to heave and the weather to moan,

And or ever that evening ended a great gale blew,
And a wave like the wave that is raised by an earthquake grew,
Till it smote on their hulls and their sails and their masts and their flags,
And the whole sea plunged and fell on the shot-shatter'd navy of Spain,
And the little Revenge herself went down by the island crags
To be lost evermore in the main.

XXVI

THE VOYAGE OF MAELDUNE

(Founded on an Irish Legend. A.D. 700)

1880

I

I was the chief of the race—he had stricken my father dead—
But I gather'd my fellows together, I swore I would strike off his head.
Each of them look'd like a king, and was noble in birth as in worth,
And each of them boasted he sprang from the oldest race upon earth.
Each was as brave in the fight as the bravest hero of song,
And each of them liefer had died than have done one another a wrong.
He lived on an isle in the ocean—we sail'd on a Friday morn—
He that had slain my father the day before I was born.

II

And we came to the isle in the ocean, and there on the shore was he.
But a sudden blast blew us out and away thro' a boundless sea.

III

And we came to the Silent Isle that we never had touch'd at before,
Where a silent ocean always broke on a silent shore,
And the brooks glitter'd on in the light without sound, and the long waterfalls
Pour'd in a thunderless plunge to the base of the mountain walls,
And the poplar and cypress unshaken by storm flourish'd up beyond sight,
And the pine shot aloft from the crag to an unbelievable height,
And high in the heaven above it there flicker'd a songless lark,
And the cock couldn't crow, and the bull couldn't low, and the dog couldn't bark.
And round it we went, and thro' it, but never a murmur, a breath—
It was all of it fair as life, it was all of it quiet as death,
And we hated the beautiful Isle, for whenever we strove to speak
Our voices were thinner and fainter than any flittermouse-shriek;
And the men that were mighty of tongue and could raise such a battle-cry
That a hundred who heard it would rush on a thousand lances and die—
O they to be dumb'd by the charm!—so fluster'd with anger were they
They almost fell on each other; but after we sail'd away.

IV

And we came to the Isle of Shouting, we landed, a score of wild birds
Cried from the topmost summit with human voices and words;
Once in an hour they cried, and whenever their voices peal'd
The steer fell down at the plow and the harvest died from the field,

And the men dropt dead in the valleys and half of the cattle went lame,
And the roof sank in on the hearth, and the dwelling broke into flame ;
And the shouting of these wild birds ran into the hearts of my crew,
Till they shouted along with the shouting and seized one another and slew ;
But I drew them the one from the other ; I saw that we could not stay,
And we left the dead to the birds and we sail'd with our wounded away.

v

And we came to the Isle of Flowers : their breath met us out on the seas,
For the Spring and the middle Summer sat each on the lap of the breeze ;
And the red passion-flower to the cliffs, and the dark-blue clematis, clung,
And starr'd with a myriad blossom the long convolvulus hung ;
And the topmost spire of the mountain was lilies in lieu of snow,
And the lilies like glaciers winded down, running out below
Thro' the fire of the tulip and poppy, the blaze of gorse, and the blush
Of millions of roses that sprang without leaf or a thorn from the bush ;
And the whole isle-side flashing down from the peak without ever a tree
Swept like a torrent of gems from the sky to the blue of the sea ;
And we roll'd upon capes of crocus and vaunted our kith and our kin,
And we wallow'd in beds of lilies, and chanted the triumph of Finn,

Till each like a golden image was pollen'd from head to feet,
And each was as dry as a cricket, with thirst in the middle-day heat.
Blossom and blossom, and promise of blossom, but never a fruit!
And we hated the Flowering Isle, as we hated the isle that was mute,
And we tore up the flowers by the million and flung them in bight and bay,
And we left but a naked rock, and in anger we sail'd away.

VI

And we came to the Isle of Fruits: all round from the cliffs and the capes,
Purple or amber, dangled a hundred fathom of grapes,
And the warm melon lay like a little sun on the tawny sand,
And the fig ran up from the beach and rioted over the land,
And the mountain arose like a jewell'd throne thro' the fragrant air,
Glowing with all-colour'd plums and with golden masses of pear,
And the crimson and scarlet of berries that flamed upon bine and vine,
But in every berry and fruit was the poisonous pleasure of wine;
And the peak of the mountain was apples, the hugest that ever were seen,
And they prest, as they grew, on each other, with hardly a leaflet between,
And all of them redder than rosiest health or than utterest shame,
And setting, when Even descended, the very sunset aflame;
And we stay'd three days, and we gorged and we madden'd, till every one drew
His sword on his fellow to slay him, and ever they struck and they slew;

And myself, I had eaten but sparely, and fought till I sunder'd the fray,
Then I bad them remember my father's death, and we sail'd away.

VII

And we came to the Isle of Fire: we were lured by the light from afar,
For the peak sent up one league of fire to the Northern Star;
Lured by the glare and the blare, but scarcely could stand upright,
For the whole isle shudder'd and shook like a man in a mortal affright;
We were giddy besides with the fruits we had gorged, and so crazed that at last
There were some leap'd into the fire; and away we sail'd, and we past
Over that undersea isle, where the water is clearer than air:
Down we look'd: what a garden! O bliss, what a Paradise there!
Towers of a happier time, low down in a rainbow deep
Silent palaces, quiet fields of eternal sleep!
And three of the gentlest and best of my people, whate'er I could say,
Plunged head down in the sea, and the Paradise trembled away.

VIII

And we came to the Bounteous Isle, where the heavens lean low on the land,
And ever at dawn from the cloud glitter'd o'er us a sunbright hand,
Then it open'd and dropt at the side of each man, as he rose from his rest,
Bread enough for his need till the labourless day dipt under the West;

And we wander'd about it and thro' it. O never was time so good!
And we sang of the triumphs of Finn, and the boast of our ancient blood,
And we gazed at the wandering wave as we sat by the gurgle of springs,
And we chanted the songs of the Bards and the glories of fairy kings;
But at length we began to be weary, to sigh, and to stretch and yawn,
Till we hated the Bounteous Isle and the sunbright hand of the dawn,
For there was not an enemy near, but the whole green Isle was our own,
And we took to playing at ball, and we took to throwing the stone,
And we took to playing at battle, but that was a perilous play,
For the passion of battle was in us, we slew and we sail'd away.

IX

And we came in an evil time to the Isle of the Double Towers,
One was of smooth-cut stone, one carved all over with flowers,
But an earthquake always moved in the hollows under the dells,
And they shock'd on each other and butted each other with clashing of bells,
And the daws flew out of the Towers and jangled and wrangled in vain,
And the clash and boom of the bells rang into the heart and the brain,
Till the passion of battle was on us, and all took sides with the Towers,
There were some for the clean-cut stone, there were more for the carven flowers,

And the wrathful thunder of God peal'd over us all the day,
For the one half slew the other, and after we sail'd away.

X

And we came to the Isle of a Saint who had sail'd with St. Brendan of yore,
He had lived ever since on the Isle and his winters were fifteen score,
And his voice was low as from other worlds, and his eyes were sweet,
And his white hair sank to his heels and his white beard fell to his feet,
And he spake to me, 'O Maeldune, let be this purpose of thine!
Remember the words of the Lord when he told us "Vengeance is mine!"
His fathers have slain thy fathers in war or in single strife,
Thy fathers have slain his fathers, each taken a life for a life,
Thy father had slain his father, how long shall the murder last?
Go back to the Isle of Finn and suffer the Past to be Past.'
And we kiss'd the fringe of his beard and we pray'd as we heard him pray,
And the Holy man he assoil'd us, and sadly we sail'd away.

XI

And we came to the Isle we were blown from, and there on the shore was he,
The man that had slain my father. I saw him and let him be.
O weary was I of the travel, the trouble, the strife and the sin,
When I landed again, with a tithe of my men, on the Isle of Finn.

XXVII

THE THROSTLE

1889

'Summer is coming, summer is coming.
I know it, I know it, I know it.
Light again, leaf again, life again, love again,'
Yes, my wild little Poet.

Sing the new year in under the blue.
Last year you sang it as gladly.
'New, new, new, new'! Is it then *so* new
That you should carol so madly?

'Love again, song again, nest again, young again,'
Never a prophet so crazy!
And hardly a daisy as yet, little friend,
See, there is hardly a daisy.

'Here again, here, here, here, happy year'!
O warble unchidden, unbidden!
Summer is coming, is coming, my dear,
And all the winters are hidden.

XXVIII

ST. TELEMACHUS

1892

Had the fierce ashes of some fiery peak
Been hurl'd so high they ranged about the globe?
For day by day, thro' many a blood-red eve,
In that four-hundredth summer after Christ,
The wrathful sunset glared against a cross
Rear'd on the tumbled ruins of an old fane
No longer sacred to the Sun, and flamed
On one huge slope beyond, where in his cave

The man, whose pious hand had built the cross,
A man who never changed a word with men,
Fasted and pray'd, Telemachus the Saint.
Eve after eve that haggard anchorite
Would hunt the desolated fane, and there
Gaze at the ruin, often mutter low
'Vicisti Galilæe'; louder again,
Spurning a shatter'd fragment of the God,
'Vicisti Galilæe!' but—when now
Bathed in that lurid crimson—ask'd 'Is earth
On fire to the West? or is the Demon-god
Wroth at his fall?' and heard an answer 'Wake
Thou deedless dreamer, lazying out a life
Of self-suppression, not in selfless love.'
And once a flight of shadowy fighters crost
The disk, and once, he thought, a shape with wings
Came sweeping by him, and pointed to the West,
And at his ear he heard a whisper 'Rome'
And in his heart he cried 'The call of God!'
And call'd arose, and slowly plunging down
Thro' that disastrous glory, set his face
By waste and field and town of alien tongue,
Following a hundred sunsets, and the sphere
Of westward-wheeling stars; and every dawn
Struck from him his own shadow on to Rome.
Foot-sore, way-worn, at length he touch'd his goal,
The Christian city. All her splendour fail'd
To lure those eyes that only yearn'd to see,
Fleeting betwixt her column'd palace-walls,
The shape with wings. Anon there past a crowd
With shameless laughter, Pagan oath, and jest,
Hard Romans brawling of their monstrous games;
He, all but deaf thro' age and weariness,
And muttering to himself 'The call of God,'
And borne along by that full stream of men,
Like some old wreck on some indrawing sea,

Gain'd their huge Colosseum. The caged beast
Yell'd, as he yell'd of yore for Christian blood.
Three slaves were trailing a dead lion away,
One, a dead man. He stumbled in, and sat
Blinded; but when the momentary gloom,
Made by the noonday blaze without, had left
His aged eyes, he raised them, and beheld
A blood-red awning waver overhead,
The dust send up a steam of human blood,
The gladiators moving toward their fight,
And eighty thousand Christian faces watch
Man murder man. A sudden strength from heaven,
As some great shock may wake a palsied limb,
Turn'd him again to boy, for up he sprang,
And glided lightly down the stairs, and o'er
The barrier that divided beast from man
Slipt, and ran on, and flung himself between
The gladiatorial swords, and call'd 'Forbear
In the great name of Him who died for men,
Christ Jesus!' For one moment afterward
A silence follow'd as of death, and then
A hiss as from a wilderness of snakes,
Then one deep roar as of a breaking sea,
And then a shower of stones that stoned him dead,
And then once more a silence as of death.

His dream became a deed that woke the world,
For while the frantic rabble in half-amaze
Stared at him dead, thro' all the nobler hearts
In that vast Oval ran a shudder of shame.
The Baths, the Forum gabbled of his death,
And preachers linger'd o'er his dying words,
Which would not die, but echo'd on to reach
Honorius, till he heard them, and decreed
That Rome no more should wallow in this old lust
Of Paganism, and make her festal hour
Dark with the blood of man who murder'd man.

XXIX

SONG FROM 'THE FORESTERS'

1892

There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be:
There are no hearts like English hearts
Such hearts of oak as they be.
There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be;
There are no men like Englishmen
So tall and bold as they be.

And these will strike for England
And man and maid be free
To foil and spoil the tyrant
Beneath the greenwood tree.

There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be;
There are no wives like English wives
So fair and chaste as they be.
There is no land like England
Where'er the light of day be;
There are no maids like English maids
So beautiful as they be.

And these shall wed with freemen,
And all their sons be free,
To sing the songs of England
Beneath the greenwood tree.

XXX

CROSSING THE BAR

1889

Sunset and evening star,
And one clear call for me !
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark !
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark ;

For tho' from out our bourne of Time and Place
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crost the bar.

NOTES

I

TO THE QUEEN

This poem was written on the occasion of Tennyson's appointment as Poet Laureate, which took place in November, 1850.

8. **him that utter'd nothing base**—William Wordsworth, Tennyson's predecessor as Laureate. Perhaps no poet who ever lived better deserved this eulogy.

17. **this poor book of song.** The seventh edition of the volume of 1842 appeared in 1851, with this poem prefixed by way of dedication.

26. **God gave her peace.** This was written shortly before the opening of the Great Exhibition of 1851. At that date Europe had enjoyed almost unbroken peace for a generation, and it was hoped that the greater intercourse of nations resulting from the Exhibition would tend to prolong it.

29-36. These anticipations, more accurate than most political prophecies, were fulfilled in such measures as the successive Acts extending the franchise in 1867-8 and 1884-5, and in the Acts establishing County Councils and other forms of local self-government.

II

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

Written in 1830, while Tennyson was still an undergraduate at Cambridge. At that time he was a devoted admirer of Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, and he shows traces of its influence not only in this poem but in the unpublished *Anacaona*, which he wrote about the same year. (*Life*, I. 56.)

Observe throughout this poem Tennyson's fondness for compound words: forward-flowing (l. 4), summer-morn (l. 5), high-walled (l. 8), citron-shadows (l. 15), clear-stemm'd (l. 23), boat-head (l. 25), moon-lit (l. 28), damask-work (l. 29), silver-chiming (l. 51), vary-coloured (l. 57), half-closed (l. 63), gold-green (l. 82), diamond-plots (l. 85), under-flame (l. 91), shadow-chequered (l. 102), myrrh-thickets (l. 104), hollow-vaulted (l. 126), new-risen (l. 130), argent-lidded (l. 135), rose-hued (l. 140), down-dropp'd (l. 147), laughter-stirr'd (l. 150). This practice is a distinguishing mark of Tennyson's earlier work; in his later writing the instances grow fewer and fewer (we have, *e.g.* 'eagle-circles' in *Gareth and Lynette*), and in the latest of all there are hardly any examples to be found.

Haroun Alraschid was the Caliph (literally 'successor,' *i.e.* of Mohammed) who ruled the Saracen empire from 786 to 809. To his reign belong many of the stories in the *Arabian Nights*, some of which, indeed, centre round his own adventures.

5. **sheeny.** The word *sheen*, according to Professor Skeat, is from the same root as the verb *to show*, and has no connection with *shine*. It was originally an adjective, but came to be used also as a noun, chiefly if not exclusively in poetry. The resemblance to *shine* doubtless misled some writers, *e.g.* Byron in the *Destruction of Sennacherib*—'the sheen of their spears.' Sir W. Scott in *Marmion* makes *sheen* an adjective in the original sense, 'the damsel donned her kirtle sheen'; but this use is so nearly obsolete that Tennyson here coins a new adjectival form derived from *sheen* as a substantive. This is found also in another of his poems of the same date, *Love and Death*.

7. **Bagdat** (usually spelled Bagdad), on the river Tigris, was founded in 762 to be the capital of the Caliphate instead of Damascus. It continued as the seat of government until the Caliphate was overthrown by the Turks some five centuries later.

fretted—*i.e.* carved into open-work, a device specially characteristic of Moorish and Saracen decoration. One of the best-known specimens is the palace of the Alhambra at Granada.

9. **Mussulman** is (as near as we can write it) the Persian form of the Arabic *Moslem*, sometimes spelt *Muslim* — the name given to the followers of Mohammed. It is in fact plural, but the termination *-man* often misleads people into treating it as singular, and forming a new and incorrect plural *Mussulmen*.

12. **shallop** (Fr. *chaloupe*)—a light boat. It is suggested that *sloop* may be another form of the same word.

15. **Citron.** *Citrus* is the botanical name of the lemon family (Fr. *citron*). The species which we call the 'citron' is the *citrus medica*: other well-known kinds are the lemon (*citrus limonum*) and the lime (*citrus acida* or *limetta*).

23. **clear-stemmed platans.** The plane tree (Lat. *platanus*) has a smooth bark, and the branches usually begin to spread at some considerable height from the ground.

28. **sward**—properly 'skin' or 'rind'; then used for the turf which covers the ground like a skin.

29. **damask-work.** The city of Damascus gave its name to three arts for which it was famous. 'Damask' is a fabric with a pattern of flowers or other similar figures woven into it: this is the sense in which the word is used here. The original damask seems to have been of silk, but the term is also applied to stuffs made of other materials. To 'damask' a blade was to give to the steel a particular wavy appearance, the secret of which belonged to the Damascus sword-smiths. To 'damascene' metal was to ornament it by inlay-work or incrustation, a very beautiful process often applied to sword-hilts.

34-42. The river-current ruffles the surface into ridges; and the boat is borne along through the clear starlit night until it enters a dark reach where the stream is overhung on either side by tall palm-trees, under whose long boughs, arched like a vaulted roof, the dates cluster upward.

clomb. Tennyson's preference for the strong form of this verb is again illustrated by VII. 18, XXII. 324, and XXIII. 397.

47. **rivage**—*i.e.* the banks of the river.

58. The shells lie in the surface of the walk, as the grain shows in the surface of polished wood. The order of words is: wandered, engrained with vary-coloured shells.

64. **disks**—*i.e.* flat circular flowers like the *zinnia*.

tiars—*i.e.* flowers with long sweeps of pendant blossom like the *dielytra*.

70. **bulbul**—called sometimes the nightingale of the East: it is really a kind of thrush, and its song is much celebrated by Oriental poets.

81. The **sudden splendour** means the lights from the palace, of which he now becomes aware. His gradual approach to it is described in the next four stanzas. See particularly lines 94, 113, 122.

84. **counterchanged . . . dark and bright.** This phrase remained, as well it might, in Tennyson's memory, and was repeated in No. LXXXIX. of *In Memoriam:*

> "Witch-elms that counterchange the floor
> Of this flat lawn with dusk and bright."

105. **myrrh-thickets.** Myrrh is a fragrant resinous gum which exudes from a tree (usually called the myrrh-tree) common in Arabia.

120 **humour.** The history of this word is rather curious. Originally it meant moisture (Lat. *humor*). Then because in early days doctors explained the temperament of the human body by the presence of healthy or unhealthy moisture, the word came to be used of bodily temperament in general, from which it was soon transferred to mental. Our phrases 'good-humoured' and 'ill-humoured' come from this: and in the present passage Tennyson uses the word as almost equivalent to what we should call 'temper,' just as Shakespeare says 'It is my humour,' meaning 'it is my way.' Later again doctors began to lay special stress on the diseased 'humours,' and so the word came to be employed as a symptom of disease, and then passed into the meaning of 'whim' or 'caprice' or 'eccentricity.' Thus 'humorous' in Beaumont and Fletcher means 'eccentric'; and in the same sense Charles Lamb says 'he is an old humourist and affects to go threadbare.' Then since eccentricities and incongruities have usually a ludicrous aspect, the word *humour* by another transference came to mean the faculty of detecting this, and giving expression to it, so as to cause amusement. And this (though the old meaning is not entirely obsolete) is the common usage at the present day.

123. **quintessence**—a word derived from the old alchemists, meaning the essence or 'strength' of a liquid after it has been boiled down five successive times. It was supposed to be the strongest obtainable. So the word is here used for the most vivid light of flame.

134. The **Fair Persian** is one of the characters in the *Arabian Nights*.

148. **Engarlanded and diaper'd.** *Engarlanded* would strictly mean crowned or wreathed with a garland. Here it means woven with patterns of garlands. *Diaper* is a linen fabric with a raised pattern, like damask.

III

SONG

This song is a typical instance of Tennyson's earliest manner: not a picture of Autumn—for the tiger-lily fades long before the leaves—but a piece of verbal music with the spirit of Autumn for its theme.

'My father,' says Lord Tennyson (*Life*, I. 56), 'did not then care, as in his later poems, for absolute accuracy.' All that is here intended is to present, in one impression, the melancholy of the dying year. The style is interesting, touched with the influence of Shelley, but already sounding a note of its own.

Contrast, for example, the first three lines of the second stanza with those that follow.

IV

THE DESERTED HOUSE

It would be difficult to find an instance of a metaphor more skilfully kept up. Almost every word is equally applicable to an actual deserted house, and to the human tenement of clay which the soul has quitted. There is in *Ecclesiastes* xii. a similar succession of metaphors leading up to—"the spirit shall return to God who gave it."

V

THE LADY OF SHALOTT

This is one of the many stories belonging to the cycle of romances about King Arthur (see introductory note to XXI.-XXIII.), and is in this form purely fantastic. Tennyson in one of his *Idylls of the King* uses the version of it given by Sir Thomas Malory in his *Morte d'Arthur*. 'Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat' (which is Malory's form of the name), dies of love for Lancelot, who has come incognito to her father's castle, and has been nursed by her when desperately wounded; she floats down on her bier to the king's palace, which Malory, with the confusion of dates and localities characteristic of the romances, places at Westminster.

3. meet the sky—*i.e.* extend to the horizon.

5. Camelot—King Arthur's capital; see note on XXI.-XXIII.

33-36. It is notoriously more difficult to find rhymes in English than in other European languages, especially what are called feminine, or weak rhymes, where the accent is on the last syllable but one. Hence English poets have always tended to be a little lax in this respect, though it must be borne in mind, in reading the rhymed verse of past times, that pronunciation is always slowly changing. This stanza contains perhaps the most extreme liberty to be found in all Tennyson's works, though in most of his earlier poems he occasionally uses the licence common in other writers. As he grew older he grew much more fastidious: *In Memoriam* contains very few doubtful rhymes, and in *The Revenge*, published in 1880, there is not one.

56. pad. The word seems to be etymologically the same as path (Germ. *pfad*), then derivatively of a horse suitable for riding along a road.

76. **greaves**—armour for the leg below the knee—derivation uncertain. The word occurs again in XXIII. 333.

84. **golden galaxy.** *Galaxy* (Gr. γάλα—milk) is the portion of the heavens known as the milky way, because the multitude of stars which it contains gives the impression of a continuous sheet of light. Note the extreme boldness of the epithet *golden* as applied to starlight; it is the colour which Tennyson habitually sees in light and flame:

cf. 'the crocus brake like fire.' VI. 94.

'Laburnums, dropping wells of fire.' *In Memoriam*, LXXXIII.

87. **blazon'd baldric.** *baldric*, a belt worn over one shoulder and under the other arm—derivation uncertain, but it is not the same as *belt*. *Blazon* is derived from Old French *blason*, a shield, then a shield with arms painted on it. Then it was used as a heraldic term, to signify the arms so exhibited; and as these were usually painted in bright colours, the verb came to be used generally as meaning to display in a striking manner. Cf. XIX. 56 for this latter use; here it is of course literal.

98. **bearded meteor.** A meteor, or shooting star, in its rapid passage across the sky seems to leave a trail of light behind, not inaptly compared to a beard.

VI

ŒNONE

This poem was originally published in 1833, but was materially altered in wording, though not in substance, for the volume of 1842. See Introduction, p. xii.

The subject of it is the familiar story of the judgment of Paris—how Paris, the shepherd son of Priam, king of Troy, was chosen to decide which of three goddesses was the most beautiful. A deep human pathos is given to the story by its being put into the mouth of Œnone, whom Paris had loved before he was made the 'judge of gods,' and deserted for the sake of Aphrodité's bribe, 'the fairest and most loving wife in Greece.'

1. Mount Ida is the range which bounds on the south the plain of Troy. Gargarus (l. 10) is one of its chief summits. Ilion (l. 13) is the other name of Troy. Troas, or the Troad, is the district belonging to the city. Simois (l. 57) and Scamander are the two streams which, rising in the range of Mount Ida, flow across the Troad to the Hellespont.

15. **forlorn of Paris**—*i.e.* deserted by him. This use of the word is nearer to the original (Germ. *verloren*—lost) than the

commoner sense of 'desolate,' which refers rather to the feelings of the person forlorn than to the fact.

22. **many-fountained**—*i.e.* in which many springs rise, the Homeric epithet for Mount Ida.

The poem is bound together by this recurrent refrain, a device which no doubt Tennyson borrowed from Theocritus directly or through Virgil. See Virg. *Ecl.* VIII. Theoc. *Id.* II.

36. **the cold crowned snake**. All snakes are cold to the touch, being cold-blooded animals. Several species of snake have hoods, which suggest the idea of a crown. The Greek name *basilisk*, given to snakes which were supposed to have a special power of fascination, literally means 'little king,' and was doubtless given because of the crown-like hood.

37. Œnone was the daughter of the river god Kedren. She is not mentioned in Homer or in any extant Greek poetry; it is uncertain whence the story about her is derived, but it was known to the Roman poets, *e.g.* Ovid.

40. **music slowly breathed**. The legend was that the walls of Troy had grown up to the sound of Apollo's lute.

55. **virgin snow**. On the north side of the mountains some remains of the winter snow might well last into the summer.

65. **Hesperian gold**. The gardens of the Hesperides were one of the fabled wonders of the ancient world. They were supposed to be situated in the far west (Hesperus = the evening star) somewhere near Mount Atlas, and to produce golden apples.

66. **ambrosially**. *Ambrosia* is the food of the gods, as nectar is their drink. It is the substantive formed from a Greek adjective meaning 'immortal.' In line 174 the adjective 'ambrosial' is used loosely as equivalent to divine.

70. **Oread**—a mountain nymph, from Gr. ὄρος, a mountain.

72. **married brows**. Eyebrows meeting in the middle, so as to form a continuous line across the forehead, were accounted a great beauty by the Greeks.

79. **halls of Peleus**. The gods honoured with their presence the marriage of Peleus with the sea-nymph Thetis. The goddess of discord, being uninvited, threw the golden apple on the table in order to spoil the feast by a quarrel. See again l. 208.

81. **light-foot Iris**—the messenger of the gods; the epithet recurs frequently in Homer.

83-4. The three goddesses are—Heré, the wife of Zeus and queen of heaven, whose sacred bird was the peacock (l. 102); Pallas, the goddess of wisdom, whose bird was the owl; and Aphrodité, the goddess of beauty, whose bird was the dove. In the Roman mythology their places were taken by Juno, Minerva, Venus, respectively.

94. **At their feet the crocus brake like fire.** This was the one new line in the 1842 version of this passage, "which is the centre light and passion of the whole, which fills the scene, not only with golden glory, but with the immortal power of the gods, before whose deity Nature blossoms into worship."[1] The crocus is the most appropriate flower to put first, because of the flame colour of the commonest variety, and also because its petals have much the shape of tongues of fire.

95. **amaracus**—not marjoram, which is the Egyptian amaracus. The Greek amaracus seems to have been a flower with a bulbous root, blooming in Spring.

asphodel—a plant of the lily tribe, with large flowers, poetically supposed to grow in the Elysian fields (see VII. 170). The word is Greek. The English *daffodil* is derived through Old French from asphodel, but is now used of a different flower, the yellow narcissus, or Lent lily.

105. Heré, the queen of heaven, naturally offers power as the reward which she will give if Paris decides in her favour.

112. **champaign**—*i.e.* level country (Lat. *campus*=a plain).

114. **homage**—the formal act by which the inferior acknowledges himself the 'man' (Lat. *homo*) of the superior.

135. Pallas, goddess of wisdom, is always represented as armed, at any rate with spear and helmet. **O'er-thwarted**—with the spear lying athwart her body.

141. Pallas offers wisdom, not merely knowledge, but the moral wisdom and strength to discern what is right and abide by it. The ideal of duty to be done, not for reward (though the reward will come of itself) but because it is duty, underlies Tennyson's whole treatment of King Arthur in the Idylls, and is set forth in other poems, notably in the Wellington Ode (No. XIX.).

151. **sequel of guerdon.** "I offer no bribe; if you decide in my favour, it will make me no fairer."

155. **frail to judge of fair**—too weak to judge wisely what is really fairest.

186. **Unbias'd**—*i.e.* unless biassed.

161-4. "Until through endurance you become strong and skilful for action, and, trained by full experience, you realise that perfect freedom lies in the willing observance of pure law." Cf. 'Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.' *S. John* viii. 32.

170. **Idalian Aphrodité.** Idalia and Paphos are both places in Cyprus, which island was supposed to be the special haunt of the goddess of beauty.

183. This was Helen, wife of Menelaus, king of Sparta. In revenge for Paris carrying her off, all the Greeks, headed by

[1] Stopford Brooke's *Tennyson*, p. 115.

Agamemnon, the brother of Menelaus, came to besiege Troy, and took it after a ten years' siege.

205. **the ruined folds** –the folds of the hills, ruined by the cutting away of the pines, and the consequent slipping of stones from above. On a steep hill side, consisting of alternate ridges and gullies, the pines usually grow thick on the ridges, but scantily if at all in the gullies.

236. **Cassandra**, daughter of king Priam, possessed the gift of prophecy, coupled with the condition that no one would believe her. It is suggested that she has already a dim idea of the ruin that is impending over Troy, though, as is clear from the next line, no tidings of the intended Greek expedition have yet reached Œnone.

VII

THE LOTOS-EATERS

After the siege of Troy, Ulysses, the ablest and wisest of the Greek chieftains, passed through a long series of adventures before reaching his home. These adventures are the subject of Homer's *Odyssey*. (Odysseus is the original spelling of the hero's name, Ulysses being the Latin variation). In the ninth book of the *Odyssey* it is told how Ulysses and his followers landed in a place apparently on the African coast, where the inhabitants gave them the fruit of the Lotos to eat, and those who tasted it forgot their homes, and only wished to remain where they were. The description of the land of the Lotos-eaters is of course ideal, and is intended to harmonise with the mental condition of dreamy content and distaste for any exertion, produced by eating of the Lotos.

In his treatment of the landscape Tennyson had two models before him, the Cave of Sleep in Spenser's *Faery Queen*, and Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, and it may fairly be said that he has surpassed them both.

10. **a downward smoke**. If a small stream of water falls over a vertical cliff, it soon breaks up into drops through the resistance of the air. When seen from a distance such a fall often looks very like a 'downward smoke'; and sometimes it apparently forms a thin sheet, a 'veil of thinnest lawn,' obscuring but not concealing the rock. The water always seems to be falling much more slowly than is really the case, and occasionally to stop altogether and go on again after a momentary pause. The most famous waterfall of this type is the Staubbach, at Lauterbrunnen in Switzerland; but there are many others. Tennyson took his description from Gavarnie, a place in the Pyrenees, which he visited in 1830, and again in 1861.

23. **galingale**—a plant of the sedge tribe, which has an aromatic root.

30. **gushing of the wave.** Tennyson was always very careful in his choice of words to represent natural sounds. Cf. XXIII. 159, 'the wild water *lapping* on the crag.' There is a marked difference between the long 'gush' of the regular tidal waves on a sandy sea-beach, and the short 'lap' of the water beating on a lake-shore where there is no tide.

38. **Between the sun and moon.** The sun is low in the west, the moon has risen in the east; sitting on the sand looking out to sea they would have the sun on one side and the moon on the other.

90. **the climbing wave.** If the sea is rough, the waves often appear to grow in height as they come near, and almost seem as if they were being driven up an incline. Small vessels such as the Greeks had, pitching in such a sea, may well be represented as laboriously climbing up a succession of waves.

113. **urn of brass.** The Greeks habitually burned their dead, and preserved the ashes in urns of metal or earthenware.

117-123. Ulysses' sailors would naturally have come from his own island. During their long absence their wives may be dead, their sons will have taken possession of their property, or possibly the great men of the island, uncontrolled by the king, may have seized it by force. Even the ten years' siege of Troy is half forgotten, so many years have elapsed since it ended. In their weariness, blended with the magical content given by eating the Lotos, they do not care to face the trouble of re-asserting their rights.

132. **pilot stars.** The Greeks, not having the compass, steered entirely by the sun and stars, if out of sight of land.

133. **amaranth**—more correctly *amarant*, from a Greek word meaning everlasting: a purple flower, poetically reputed never to fade.

moly—a fabulous plant supposed to have magical powers. In the *Odyssey* moly is given to Ulysses by Hermes as a means of combating the enchantments of Circé.

142. **wov'n acanthus wreath.** The *acanthus* is a plant common in the Mediterranean basin, with handsome prickly leaves. The *wreath* is *woven* by the natural growth of the plant. It is said that the idea of the Corinthian capital was suggested to the Greek sculptor Callimachus by seeing acanthus leaves growing up through the interstices of a basket and round a tile which covered it.

149. Observe the change of metre at this point. See introductory note to XXV.

152. **wallowing monster**—the whale, occasionally found in the Mediterranean, though its usual haunts are in the far north and south of the great oceans.

155. The Epicurean conception of the gods was that they lived a life of enjoyment, 'careless of mankind.' The weary sailors cannot believe that the gods care at all for their fate: they even go a little farther, and suggest that the gods take a malicious pleasure in the sufferings and useless prayers of men. Cf. VI. 129.

VIII

FREEDOM

This little poem, with a somewhat similar one beginning "You ask me why, tho' ill at ease," were written on the occasion of the rejection by the House of Lords, in October, 1831, of the Reform Bill, which was passed in the following year.

6. **Self-gather'd**—*i.e.* concentrated, wrapt up in her thoughts.

14. **isle-altar**—*i.e.* England, the home and shrine of Freedom.

15, 16. A happy phrase, suggesting (as the figure of the goddess Freedom) the well-known representation of Britannia with the trident and crown. **God-like**, because the trident properly belongs to the sea-god Neptune.

IX

ULYSSES

"*Ulysses*," said Tennyson, "was written soon after Arthur Hallam's death, and gave my feeling about the need of going forward, and braving the struggle of life, perhaps more simply than anything in *In Memoriam*" (*Life*, I. p. 196). The need of going forward is of course felt under very different conditions in the two cases. The youthful Tennyson will not let his energies be paralysed by grief, the aged Ulysses cannot be happy in his listless retirement. Both alike feel that action is the best remedy for the evils under which they suffer, perhaps the best for most of the ills that flesh is heir to.

Ulysses ultimately succeeded in reaching Ithaca, an island on the west coast of Greece, of which he was king. After many years of strenuous action, he cannot settle down to the petty routine of his little island realm. So Tennyson represents him as calling together the remnant of his old comrades—according to Homer he returned home alone, having lost them all, but this deviation from the legend gives much greater dramatic force to

the poem. He will sail out into the unknown western ocean, and employ what little remains to him of life in exploring it.

The spirit of the poem is, and doubtless was intended to be, in strong contrast to that of *The Lotos-eaters*. Ulysses is the ideal man of action, who cannot be content to live in ease and idleness while 'some work of noble note may yet be done.' His comrades, after eating of the Lotos, grow weary of toil, and grasp eagerly at a chance of rest, perhaps without asking themselves how soon they will grow weary of idleness.

3. **Matched with an aged wife**—Penelope, who had kept his home for him during the thirty years of his absence.

4. **unequal laws.** His subjects are so nearly savage that he has to govern them as best he can, without even the satisfaction of framing civilised laws for them.

10. **Hyades** (a Greek word signifying rainy)—a group of stars, the rising and setting of which were in the ancient world supposed to be attended by rain and storms. They are alluded to by more than one Latin poet in this way, *e.g.* Horace, *Carm.* I. 3, 14.

16. **my peers**—*i.e.* my equals (Lat. *pares*). Ulysses was one of the most prominent of the Greek champions at Troy. Observe how Ulysses, in enumerating the joys of his past life, makes no mention of any of the peaceful pleasures in which most men delight.

17. **windy Troy.** This is a stock epithet for Troy in Homer.

20. **whose margin fades.** The horizon seems at any moment to be the margin of the world : as one moves it recedes, and can never be reached.

29. **for some three suns**—for three or four years of life, which are all that he can fairly expect.

33-43. Ulysses sees that his son Telemachus is better suited than himself to rule Ithaca. He has what his father has not, the gifts requisite for governing the 'rugged people' and gradually improving them. And he has none of Ulysses' exceptional qualities, such as force him into activity. Ulysses is not only neglecting no duty in leaving the sceptre to Telemachus, he is doing what is best for his people. And Telemachus also may be trusted to be tender to his mother, again and finally left a widow, and to carry on the household worship, a matter of great importance to the Greeks.

47. **frolic** (Germ. *fröhlich* = joyous) is now more commonly used in English as a substantive.

53. **strove with Gods.** During the siege of Troy the gods are represented as having taken part, some on one side, some on the other, and to have even joined in the fighting.

58-9. **smite the sounding furrows**. The phrase is taken from the *Odyssey*. The furrows are the hollows between the waves. It must be remembered that Ulysses' ships, though they had sails, were propelled mainly by oars.

60. **the baths of all the western stars**—another Homeric phrase. The Greeks of course believed that the heavens revolved round the earth, so that the stars in setting would sink into the western sea.

62. **gulfs**. The word gulf, which properly signifies a deep bay, has been extended to mean any vast cavity—an abyss (cf. 'Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed,' *S. Luke*, xvi. 24)—and then derivatively, a whirlpool, or current such as would carry a vessel into such an abyss.

63. **the Happy Isles**. Greek legend placed the abode of the blessed after death in islands somewhere out in the western ocean, whether from vague knowledge of the existence of the Canary Isles, or possibly from the sunset clouds looking like islands out at sea.

There is a beautiful description of the Isles of the Blessed in Pindar, *Ol.* II., to the following effect:

Alike by day and by night enjoying the sunshine, the good pass a peaceful existence, not ploughing land or sea with the toil of their hands for a scanty dole, but honoured of the Gods who love righteousness they live a tearless life. And such as have thrice, on either side of the gate of death, kept their souls pure from all wrong, journey by the highway of Zeus, to where the ocean breezes ever play round the Isles of the Blessed. There blaze flowers of gold, on the trees and in the water, and with these they wreathe their arms and necks. And among them are numbered Peleus and Cadmus; thither too, when she had won the heart of Zeus by her prayers, his mother brought Achilles, slayer of Hector the pillar of Troy.

X

THE DAY-DREAM

34. **Oriel**—a recess within a room, particularly one highly decorated, from the Old French *oriol*, in low Latin, *oriolum*. This, according to Skeat, is a corrupted form of *aureolum*, and means 'gilded.' As such a recess would probably have a window of ornamental character, the word has come to be popularly used for an elaborate window projecting outwards.

35. **prisms**. A prism is a solid figure whose sides are parallelograms, the ends, whatever their shape, being equal and parallel.

A ray of light passing through a prism of glass is broken up into its component colours, hence called prismatic. Tennyson here uses the word to signify the coloured rays of light so formed.

65. **coverlid**—a different form of the more usual *coverlet*, the uppermost cover of a bed. The last syllable was formerly spelt in many ways, and it is doubtful whether or not the word is etymologically the same as the modern French *couvre-lit*.

71. **doth inform Stillness with love.** The word *inform* originally meant to put into shape, hence to imbue with any specific quality. The modern sense, 'to impart knowledge,' is obviously derived from this.

106. **The Magic Music.** A reference to the game, now almost forgotten, in which something was hidden, and those who were looking for it were guided in their search by music played more or less loudly. The fairy prince's own heart supplies him with guidance instead of music.

166. **the crescent-bark.** The new moon seems to ride like a boat attached to a buoy upon the sea of clouds.

XI

ST. AGNES EVE

St. Agnes' day is on January 21st: she has always been regarded as the patron saint of purity.

13. Her dress is as white as human skill can make it, her soul is as pure as is possible to humanity: yet both are dark in comparison to the whiteness of nature, to the perfection of the divine. Cf. 'what Her all but utter whiteness held for sin,' said of the nun in *The Holy Grail* (XXII. 84).

XII

THE LORD OF BURLEIGH

According to Tennyson's friend Fitzgerald, who heard this poem read aloud from manuscript, the author doubted whether it was not "too familiar for the public taste": his friends apparently thought differently, and the poem therefore appeared in the volume of 1842.

XIII

A FAREWELL

Some time after the death of Tennyson's father, the family left Somersby in Lincolnshire, of which he had been rector.

This song is a farewell to the stream which flows through the village.

XIV

THE EAGLE

"I used to think," says Mr. Stopford Brooke (*Tennyson*, p. 893) "that the phrase 'wrinkled sea' in the fragment called *The Eagle* was too bold. But one day I stood on the edge of the cliff below Slieve League in Donegal. The cliff from which I looked down on the Atlantic was nine hundred feet in height. Beside me the giant slope of Slieve League plunged down from its summit for more than eighteen hundred feet. As I gazed on the sea below, which was calm in the shelter, for the wind blew off the land, the varying puffs that eddied in and out among the hollows and juttings of the cliffs covered the quiet surface with an infinite network of involved ripples. It was exactly Tennyson's wrinkled sea. Then by huge good fortune an eagle, which built on one of the ledges of Slieve League, flew out of his eyrie and poised, barking, on his wings; but in a moment fell precipitate, as their manner is, straight down a thousand feet into the sea; and I could not help crying out:

> 'The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
> He watches from his mountain walls,
> And like a thunderbolt he falls.'"

3. **azure**—an Arabic word used first for the colour of lapis lazuli, and thence transferred to the blue of the sky.

XV

BREAK, BREAK, BREAK

The scene of this poem is Clevedon Church, set on a lonely hill overlooking the Bristol Channel. Here lies buried Arthur Hallam, the most intimate of Tennyson's College friends, who died suddenly at Vienna, September 15th, 1833, in the twenty-third year of his age.

XVII

SONGS FROM 'THE PRINCESS'

Among the movements of the Victorian age, most of which find some echo in Tennyson's poetry, that in favour of 'Women's Rights,' and especially of the better education of women, was one of the earliest. Tennyson took a keen interest in the latter aspect of the question, and *The Princess*, published in 1847, was the result. It is reported that he said at this time, "the sooner woman finds out, before the great educational movement begins, that 'woman is not undeveloped man, but diverse,' the better it will be for the progress of the world" (*Life*, I. 249).

It has been impossible, in this selection, to find room for anything more out of *The Princess* than three of the beautiful lyrics inserted between the parts, which are intended to show the real drift of the whole. "At the next interval," to quote the language of Charles Kingsley, "is the well known bugle song, the idea of which is that of twin-labour and twin-fame in a pair of lovers. In the next the memory of wife and child inspirits the soldier on the field: in the next the sight of the fallen hero's child opens the sluices of his widow's tears."

1. This song was suggested by the echoes at Killarney, which place Tennyson visited in 1842.

9. **scar** or scaur—a rock, properly an isolated rock surrounded by the sea.

10. **Elf-land.** The echoes sound like fairy horns blown from the rock.

15. **our echoes.** The sympathy between us is not material, like the answer of the echo, but spiritual, and will last for ever, instead of ceasing like the echo when the bugle is no longer made to arouse it.

11. This song may be compared with Wordsworth's lines in *The Happy Warrior*:

> "He who, though thus endued as with a sense
> And faculty for storm and turbulence,
> Is yet a soul whose master bias leans
> To homefelt pleasures and to gentle scenes;
> Sweet images! which, wheresoe'er he be,
> Are at his heart: and such fidelity
> It is his darling passion to approve:
> More brave for this, that he hath much to love."

XVIII

'CHRISTMASTIDE,' FROM 'IN MEMORIAM'

In Memoriam was occasioned by the death of Tennyson's dearest friend, Arthur Hallam, in September 1833, and was published in 1850. The poems contained in it were written separately, and were ultimately formed into a coherent whole. The incidents touched on are by no means in chronological order: but the poem has, so to speak, a chronology of its own, marked by the three Christmas seasons mentioned in it. With the last of these, the subject of the following extract, the poet passes finally from 'the grief that saps the mind,' into a resolute hopefulness for himself and for the world.

The first two sections, CIV., CV., refer to the Christmas of 1837, when the Tennyson family had recently moved from Somersby, the home of the poet's childhood, to their new home at High Beech in Epping Forest.

CIV. 3. The **single church** is Waltham Abbey, founded by King Harold. Here his body was interred after the battle of Hastings.

CV. 9-12. "The festival customs of Christmas Eve, which were kept up in the old home out of regard for long association, are dropped now that we are in a new abode."

18. **wassail**—originally the words used in drinking a person's health, then by transference the liquor drunk, especially hot spiced wine and the like.

mantle—be covered with froth.

24. **what lightens**—*i.e.* the motion of the rising stars which shine in the east.

28. **closing cycle**. There are various references in the Latin poets to cycles or periods of years, each of which is supposed to have a character of its own. We hear of a golden age, from which the world has degenerated, and the hope is expressed that after the proper number of revolving periods, the golden age will return. Tennyson takes up this idea, and trusts that this Christmas may be the beginning of a better time.

CVI. This section is addressed to the bells ringing the old year out and the new year in. "Ring out the poet's own grief, so far as it is mere useless brooding, ring out all that poisons life and interferes with true progress, ring out evil passions and worn-out prejudices, and ring in all that is ennobling and hopeful."

XIX

ODE ON THE DEATH OF THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON

This poem was published on the day of the Duke's funeral, November 18th (*Life*, I. 361), and was very unfavourably received by the newspaper critics, a remarkable instance of literary blindness.

The Duke of Wellington died on September 14th, 1852, aged 83, and was buried under the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, beside Lord Nelson. The funeral was attended by representatives of every army in Europe, and of every regiment in the British service.

23. Wellington played an important part in politics on the Conservative side for some time. In his last years he stood rather aloof from party, and from his great services and reputation occupied a position almost unique.

42. The **World-victor** is Napoleon, who had at one time practically all continental Europe at his feet.

49. The dome of St. Paul's is mounted by a gilt cross.

80-82. The spirit of Nelson speaks these three lines; but the effect is far finer and more impressive when the words abruptly break in on the dirge, and the speaker is not named.

98. Wellington's first independent command was in India, when his brother, Marquis Wellesley, was Governor-General. On August 23rd, 1803, he won the battle of **Assaye** (more properly spelt Assye), which was decisive of the Mahratta war, with about 4,500 trustworthy troops, English and Sepoys, against about 60,000.

101. Wellington was given the chief command in the Peninsular war in 1809. He recognised from the first that the only chance of ultimate success against the very superior strength of the French lay in acting carefully on the defensive until other European powers should combine against Napoleon. Therefore, immediately on landing, he gave orders for the construction of the lines of Torres Vedras, behind which he might retire in case of need, across the tongue of land at the end of which Lisbon stands. The front line, about twenty-five miles north of Lisbon, was so strong that the French never ventured to attack it; the second, still stronger, was ten miles in rear; the third was close round Lisbon.

107. In 1813 Wellington was able to assume the offensive in earnest. His victory at Vittoria forced the French to evacuate

Spain. It was followed by a long series of smaller contests in and north of the Pyrenees, in which Wellington steadily gained on the French, continued till the fall of Napoleon, April 1814.

119. Napoleon returned from Elba in March 1815 ; his second reign was terminated by the battle of Waterloo, fought on Sunday, June 18th. Wellington, with a slightly smaller army than Napoleon's, stood to fight, in reliance on the Prussians coming to his support. The roads were greatly injured by rain, and the Prussian troops were so much delayed that Wellington had great difficulty in holding his ground long enough. It was nearly sunset before the Prussian attack on Napoleon's right began to be successful. A marked feature of the battle was the repeated charges of the French cavalry on the English infantry formed in squares.

137. Nelson's two great victories before Trafalgar, where he was killed, were at the Nile (August 1st, 1798) and Copenhagen (April 2nd, 1801).

152. In 1848-49 there were revolutionary movements in many states of Europe, but they were mostly ill-directed and needlessly violent, and ended in the restoration of the old despotic governments, except in France, where a short-lived republic was established.

162. From the fifteenth century, despotism, backed by standing armies, was virtually universal in Europe, England forming the only exception. Here the ancient constitutional checks on the crown were never entirely lost ; and from the civil conflicts of the seventeenth century there arose a combination of practical self-government with monarchical forms.

211. There existed in the Middle Ages a belief, in various forms, that there were places through which access to Paradise might be gained by overcoming a series of physical obstacles. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is the elaboration of the same idea in an avowed allegory.

XX

THE BROOK

The brook described in this poem is ideal: the characteristically careful details are not taken from any particular stream. The wording is of course intended to suggest the sound of a quick-flowing brook, especially the fourth stanza. This is a favourite device with poets, and not always of much value. Whatever the merit of the device, this poem is certainly an admirable specimen.

1. **coot and hern.** *Coot*, a small water-bird (*fulica atra*), which frequents lakes and pools. *Hern*, more properly *heron*, a large and beautiful water-bird, unfortunately much less common in England than formerly. The heron was the bird which falconers most liked to attack, in the days when hawking flourished.

4. **bicker**—originally to skirmish, fight on a small scale, hence to make any continued noise, such as that of a rapid stream over stones.

7. **thorps**—*i.e.* hamlets ; it is the same word as Germ. *dorf*.

XXI-XXIII

The three following poems are taken from the *Idylls of the King*, in which Tennyson treated after his own fashion the legends of King Arthur. These legends appear to be partly Welsh and partly Breton, with later expansions and additions belonging to the days of chivalry. There are many versions of them in various languages, the best known being Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, written in the reign of Edward IV., and noted as one of the books printed by Caxton. Like the other romances of chivalry, such as *Amadis de Gaul*, they deal rather with an imaginary world than with real history. The places named can rarely be identified, the personages are legendary, the political conditions indicated never existed. According to the romances, after the Romans evacuated Britain, Arthur was king over all Britain and many other realms, having vassal princes under him—Sir Lancelot for instance is represented as lord over most part of France—and carried on great and successful wars with the heathen invaders. It is historically certain that there never was a single king, even over South Britain, till centuries afterwards. Arthur, if he was a real personage at all, which seems to be disputable, was a leader of the Britons in their resistance to the invading Angles and Saxons, possibly in the north, more probably in the south of the island. It is known that the West Saxons had to fight long and hard before conquering Wilts and Somerset, and the 'twelve great battles' (see XXII. 209), which are first mentioned in a ninth century chronicle of very doubtful authority, may be an exaggeration of the occasional successes gained by the Britons in this warfare.

Nothing can better illustrate the vagueness of the legends, in respect of relation to time and place, than their treatment of Arthur's capital, which is called Camelot. Malory says that it is the same as Winchester, in which city visitors are still shown the Round Table, fixed against a wall inside the Castle ; but it is historically impossible that Winchester can ever have been the capital of a great British kingdom. Camelot has also been

identified with Carlisle, which fits the theory above-mentioned that Arthur's wars were waged in the north, and with Caerleon on the Usk, which corresponds to the Welsh origin of some of the legends. Some writers have placed Camelot at Queen Camel in Somersetshire, where there are some Roman remains. It does not appear whether the local traditions there have any other basis than the similarity of name: Roman buildings must obviously have survived in many places down to the date attributed to Arthur. But we may hold that his capital city is as entirely imaginary as Tennyson's beautiful description of it (XXI. 68-74 and XXII. 237-248).

From Tennyson's point of view, however, it does not matter whether or not there was any historical basis for the legends. He employs them in order to set forth, to quote his own words, 'Sense at war with Soul.' His ideal King, devoted altogether to the duties of his high office, tries to establish peace and order throughout a disordered realm. His Round Table is a body of knights pledged to lead virtuous lives, and to be the king's instruments in good government:

> "I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
> To reverence the King, as if he were
> Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
> To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
> To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
> To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
> To honour his own word as if his God's."

At first the king's efforts promise to be crowned by full success, the lawless wrong-doers are punished and reduced to obedience by the strong arm of the knights. The Idyll of *Gareth and Lynette* belongs to these early years: a typical wrong is successfully redressed by one of Arthur's knights, full of the true spirit of the Round Table. Gradually the knights lose somewhat of their early enthusiasm, and seek to please themselves rather than to do the king's work. The quest of the Holy Grail is started by one or two knights deeply imbued with mystic piety, and many others pledge themselves to the same quest in reckless levity, in spite of the king's warning that they are thus neglecting obvious duties. Finally there is a rebellion, and Arthur is 'deeply wounded through the helm' in the battle in which the rebels are destroyed, and disappears, with an indication that his failure is not final, but that some day he may return and bring the golden age which all his life through he had striven to establish.

Tennyson uses the word Idyll in a much wider sense than previous writers, to denote any narrative complete in itself, on a scale too small to merit the title of epic. The word, which is Greek, means literally a little picture, and is used as the name

for short poems describing a single scene or incident. And as Theocritus, the first poet to whose writings this name is given, dealt mainly with rural scenes, the word came to signify rustic poetry. The *Eclogues* of Virgil, which are more or less imitations of Theocritus, are otherwise called *Bucolics*, *i.e.* poems of shepherd life. Tennyson's volume of 1842, entitled *English Idyls and other poems*, contained several which may properly be classed with the *Bucolics* of Virgil or the *Idylls* of Theocritus, such as *Dora* and *The Gardener's Daughter*. Tennyson had a fanciful idea of discriminating between his two kinds of Idyll, by writing the title of the first with one *l*, the latter with two.

XXI

GARETH AND LYNETTE

This story is told in Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, Book VII. According to Malory, Gareth is the youngest of four brothers—Gawain being the eldest—who are the sons of Arthur's sister and her husband, King Lot of Orkney. He comes in disguise to Arthur's court, asks meat and drink for a year, and is put under Sir Kay, the master of the kitchen, who mocks at him and calls him Beaumains, that is 'Fair-hands,' because he is an idle pensioner on the king's bounty. At the year's end there comes to the court a distressed damsel and demands succour for her sister Lionesse, who is besieged in Castle Dangerous by the knight of the Red Lands, a giant with the strength of seven men, who had overthrown even Sir Gawain in fight. Gareth claims the quest, is secretly knighted by Lancelot, and sets forth with the damsel, who reviles him throughout the journey as a 'kitchen-knave.' The rest of the story is narrated by Tennyson almost exactly as Malory tells it; indeed nothing material is added except Arthur's commission to Lancelot, the fantastic equipment of the three knights through whom Gareth wins his way, and the dramatic surprises of the final victory.

3. **spate.** The word is Gaelic, and means properly a flood caused by a heavy rainfall. It is commonly used for the swollen current of a river (especially of a mountain torrent) in time of flood.

18. **Heaven yield her for it**—*i.e.* requite her for her love.

52. **the jousts**—*i.e.* the tournaments and other mimic battles between the knights. Malory says, 'But ever when he saw any jousting of knights that he would see an he might . . . and when there were any masteries done thereat would he be, and there might none cast bar nor stone to him by two yards."

71. **Mage**—*i.e.* Merlin, the wise counsellor and prophet of Arthur's court.

The word Mage is derived from 'Magi,' the name of a Persian or Median tribe mentioned by Herodotus as having special skill in interpreting dreams. Then it came to be used of anyone who had or claimed supernatural powers, and hence were derived the words 'magic' and 'magician.'

110. **broach**—*i.e.* spit (Fr. *broche*). In the old version of the story Gareth sits in the kitchen as a beggar. Tennyson makes him do service.

119. **in-crescent and de-crescent**—*i.e.* waxing and waning. The word 'crescent' as applied to the new moon is derived from this origin.

134. Here Gareth is knighted by Arthur himself. In Malory's version he is knighted by Lancelot, after jousting with him.

135. **quest**—here used not in its precise sense of 'search,' but more generally as 'adventure.' See line 509.

248. **weird.** The word properly means 'destined' (A.-S. *wyrd*, destiny), usually with the sense of 'appointed by some supernatural and inevitable power.' It is so used in XXIII. 44:

"this last dim weird battle of the West."

Here it means little more than 'strange' or 'enchanted.' The word has been much misused since the time of Tennyson.

275. **the stone Avanturine**—more exactly spelled 'Aventurine,' a kind of quartz crystal filled with specks of yellow mica which sparkle in the light. In one of the Venetian factories the way to make a variety of coloured glass, closely resembling this, was discovered by accident (Ital. *a ventura*), and the name given to the glass was afterwards transferred to the stone.

308. **catapult**—a large and very complicated engine of war, used for hurling stones and darts in siege operations: it represented the artillery of ancient warfare. A picture of a catapult will be found on p. 152 of Mr. Warde Fowler's *Julius Caesar*.

341. **the flower . . . arrowlets**—*i.e.* the dandelion.

459. **unhappiness**—used here in its original sense of ill-fortune. The word 'hap' means chance: cf. such words as 'perhaps,' 'happen,' etc.

466-70. Lancelot was the greatest of all the Round Table. It was inconceivable that any chance should have brought him down before Gareth's spear, and so tarnished his fame in the eyes of his fellow-knights. And if such a chance had happened, Gareth would have been not proud of his victory, but 'shamed and sad' at the accidental defeat of the better man.

492. **his justice**—*i.e.* King Arthur's.

529. **palling**—*i.e.* darkening as under a pall.

545. **Lyonors.** Malory calls her Lionesse: Tennyson alters the name, no doubt to avoid confusion with the land of Lyonnesse where Arthur fought his last battle. See XXIII. 31 and note.

553. **crown'd with fleshless laughter**—*i.e.* wearing on the top of his helmet the grinning skull which in l. 574 is cleft asunder by Gareth's sword.

597. **he that told the tale in olden times.** Malory's version ends with the marriage of Beaumains and Lionesse. 'He that told it later' is Tennyson himself.

XXII

THE HOLY GRAIL

The legend of the Holy Grail is sufficiently told in the poem itself: the quest for it symbolises the efforts of the soul to attain perfect union with God. King Arthur, whose ideal for life is duty and not ascetic devotion, disapproves of the quest, though he recognises that it is the proper mission of exceptional persons such as Galahad. Tennyson, who makes Arthur the representative of his own ideal, has taken from Sir Thomas Malory little beyond the narrative of the first appearance of the Holy Grail, veiled by a cloud, and of the consequent vow of the knights to go in search of it. Sir Percivale's adventures, which are entirely original, are obviously intended to point the moral of the King's dislike to the principle of the quest. Percivale is, after Galahad, the most pious and earnest of all the knights, yet even with him everything turns to dust. At last he has a gleam of success, but only to see the Holy Grail disappear for ever with Galahad, and to return broken in spirit, no longer fit for active work in the world, and only craving for the 'silent life.'

5. **the cowl**—*i.e.* the hood of a monk's gown—here used as typical of the monastic life, as 'helmet' in the next line of the profession of arms.

15. **puffed the swaying branches into smoke.** When the yew tree is in flower in the spring, the wind sometimes blows off the pollen in such quantities as to make a cloud about the tree. Tennyson uses the same phrase in section XXXIX. of *In Memoriam*, which was not in the original edition, and was written at about the same time with the idyll of *The Holy Grail* (*Life*, II. 53).

48. **land of Aromat.** The name *Arimathæa* seems to be the Greek equivalent of Ha-Ramathaim, meaning 'the two eminences.' Such a name might obviously suit many places, and

the actual home of Joseph is not identified. There is nothing to show whence came the form *Aromat*, which Tennyson doubtless adopted to suit his verse.

49. **the day of darkness**—the day of our Lord's crucifixion, when, according to *St. Matthew* XXVII. 52, "many bodies of the saints which slept arose."

52. **the winter thorn.** The legend is that Joseph of Arimathæa planted his staff in the ground where Glastonbury Abbey was afterwards built, and that it always flowered on Christmas day. There was a hawthorn tree at Glastonbury which flowered in winter, down to the time of the Great Rebellion. A tree of the thorn tribe, which usually flowers a second time in winter, is common in Syria, and seedlings of it, according to Hone's *Everyday Book*, have been successfully raised in England.

63. **wattles from the marsh.** There was a 'little lonely church' at Glastonbury in very early times, which was doubtless built of the humblest materials. *Wattles*—anything woven of twigs or boughs.

67. **to-day**—*i.e.* in our time.

87. **thro' five or six.** The traditional date for the beginning of the Anglo-Saxon conquest is 449, and the latter part of Arthur's reign must be dated a good many years later. Five or six very long lives would just span the interval since our Lord's time.

135. **Galahad.** Tennyson had published in 1842 a poem entitled *Sir Galahad*, who is there described as the ideal knight, pure and devout,

("My strength is as the strength of ten
Because my heart is pure.")

engaged in the quest of the Holy Grail. In this Idyll Galahad bears the same character; he, and he alone, is really fit for the mystic quest. The greater part of what relates to him is told as in Malory; but the wonderful description of his reaching the spiritual city is Tennyson's own.

145. **Merlin's chair.** One of the seats at the Round Table was called the Siege (Fr. for seat) Perilous, and Merlin declared that no one could sit in it without injury, save the person for whom it was destined, who according to the romance was Galahad.

166. **And Gawain swore, and louder than the rest.** Gawain was Arthur's nephew, elder brother of Gareth (see XXI.): he appears in several of the Idylls. Tennyson, doubtless for the sake of contrast, represents him as always light-minded and lacking in principle.

185. A reference to our Lord's question about John the Baptist (*St. Luke* VII. 24). "Do you really know what you are going

in search of? Is it mere idle curiosity, or are you truly looking for something that partakes of the divine?"

198. **Taliessin** was the name of a famous bard. Everyone, says the king, thinks that he can sing because Taliessin can, or do wonders in a tournament because Lancelot is skilful. So all think that they must needs take part in the quest of the Holy Grail because Galahad is called to it.

210. The **White Horse** is the emblem of the first heathen invaders, those who landed under Hengist. Hence it is used generally to denote the Teutonic enemy, though it properly belongs only to their kingdom of Kent.

217. **wandering fires** — the phosphorescent light, popularly known as Will o' the Wisp, which is occasionally seen flitting over marshy ground.

248. **wyvern**—a heraldic animal, a kind of flying serpent. The word seems to be another form of the more familiar *viper*.

griffin—also a fabulous animal, with the head and wings of an eagle and body of a lion.

One of the most characteristic features of mediæval architecture is the carving of gargoyles, etc. into grotesque figures, sometimes human but more frequently of animals.

257. **rendered mystically**—painted or sculptured symbolically. For the 'three Queens' see note to XXIII. 402.

342. Percivale had started 'lifted up in heart' at the thought of his own deeds, and when one scene after another 'fell into dust' he grew merely despondent. The hermit tells him that he has missed the true course; if he had thought nothing of himself, he might have succeeded like Galahad.

351. **gray-hair'd wisdom.** It was humility which made the 'wise men' willing to distrust their own knowledge, and follow the star to Bethlehem.

360. **sacring of the mass**—the consecration of the elements in the Eucharist.

365. **that smote itself into the bread.** This phrase is taken directly from Sir Thomas Malory.

375. Because Galahad is pure and true, as evidenced by the Holy Grail being ever present to his sight, he is also strong, and able to do, almost without effort, the very things which it was his business to do, as a knight of the Round Table.

411. **samite**—from the Greek ἑξάμιτον, woven with six threads. The modern German *sammet*, velvet, is the same word. See also XXIII. 149.

XXIII

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

Most part of this poem (lines 120-390) was published in 1842, under Sir Thomas Malory's title, *Morte d'Arthur*. It was preceded by a playful introduction, describing a party of friends sitting together. The poet of the party had written 'his epic, his King Arthur, some twelve books,' and burned it as merely 'faint Homeric echoes, nothing worth.' But one of his friends had, it seemed, 'plucked the eleventh from the hearth,' and it is accordingly read aloud. Fitzgerald, one of the friends to whom this poem was first read in 1835, says (see *Life*, I. 190) that it had then no introduction; and that the half apologetic lines were added before publication, as in the case of *The Day-dream*, "to give a reason for telling an old-world tale." When Tennyson in later years was working out his complete scheme of the Idylls he naturally omitted this introduction, and prefixed the description of the final battle, adding also a few lines to indicate that all was not lost with Arthur's disappearance, and at the same time changing the title. Though Tennyson was extremely fastidious about the wording of his poems, and altered some of them greatly in later editions (see Introduction, p. xiii.), after nearly thirty years he did not find occasion to alter a single word of the original *Morte d'Arthur*.

At last the end has come. The Queen's treachery is known to Arthur: there is a rebellion headed by Modred, the king's nephew, and the heathen invaders are leagued with the rebels. Arthur feels that for the time he has failed, although he has done his best. Still he perseveres, drives the rebel host into the far west, and there annihilates it in a great battle, in which he receives a deadly wound. Then follows the incident described in this poem, ending with Arthur's removal, by agency which is only vaguely explained, to 'the island valley of Avilion.' With Arthur's disappearance the original poem ended: it was, as noted above, the eleventh book of the projected epic (assuming that the introduction may so far be taken seriously), and might have been followed by a twelfth, dealing more at length with the mystery of Arthur's possible return, or with the other matters which fill the last book of Malory's work. Tennyson however ultimately preferred to close the poem briefly with the 'new sun bringing the new year'; and it can hardly be doubted that this accords better with his spiritual treatment of the whole Arthurian romance.

9-28. Arthur is sorely disturbed, not so much by his private sorrow as by his failure as king. He has worked God's will to

the best of his power and judgment, and all in vain. The faithless wife and the treacherous friend are thought of chiefly as lost instruments for good. He cannot even die and be at rest. Yet his faith is sound at heart—'we see not to the close'; though for the present the realm which he has laboriously built up has broken to pieces, there is yet something, he knows not what, to which he will be called in the future.

26. **reels back into the beast**—staggers under the blows it has received, and falls back into mere indulgence of the natural inclinations, like brute beasts.

31. **Lyonnesse**. It is geologically certain that the whole region of the British Isles was once much higher above the sea, so that it formed part of the European continent. The whole western side of the group being more or less mountainous, the subsequent sinking of the land left a great number of islands which represent the hills, and of narrow inlets (the Scotch lochs and firths) which represent the valleys of a previous age. Experts have now no doubt that there were men in Britain before it became insular, and it is at least possible that a vague tradition of the change may be the origin of the legends of a lost land stretching out westwards, of which the Scilly Isles are the fragments left visible. Whatever may have been the case in remote geological ages, there is no evidence that any great geographical catastrophe, such as would justify the phrase 'upheaven from the abyss by fire,' has happened within human times.

44. **weird**. See note on XXI. 248.

83. **fought with Rome**. Generations had passed since any Britons had been in arms against Rome; but the heathen invaders, who were allied with Modred and his rebels, might some of them have 'fought with Rome.' Or perhaps these are swords handed down from father to son since the times of British independence (no unusual thing when arms and armour were costly), and now at last shattered.

128. There is one place in the west of England where a lake is separated from the sea by a strip of land. This lake is Slapton Lea, between Dartmouth and Start Point. It is however on a very much smaller scale than Tennyson's 'great water,' though it may have suggested the idea.

145. **my brand Excalibur**. The name of King Arthur's famous sword is spelt in many ways. Malory says that the name "is as much to say as Cut-steel." There seems however no trustworthy evidence for this or any other meaning.

149. **samite**. See note on XXII. 411. This line is repeated twice later in the poem, a device which Homer often employs.

175. **topaz-lights**. The name *topaz* is applied to several

different precious stones, all clear, and nearly all of a darkish yellow colour. The most valuable, the so-called Oriental topaz, is a yellow variety of the sapphire.

jacinth work. The name *hyacinthus*, which is the Greek form of the word, was anciently applied to the sapphire. But the stone now known as *jacinth*, which was largely used in classical times as a gem for engraving, is a hard reddish-brown stone, a variety of Zircon, which resembles amber in appearance, though much harder.

189. **lapping on the crag.** See note on VII. 31.

198. **As thou art lief and dear.** These words are taken from Malory. *lief* (German *lieb*), dear, almost obsolete in English except in the comparative *liefer*, which is sometimes used as equivalent to rather, as in XXVI. 6.

202. **dewy pebbles,** *i.e.* wet with the lapping of the water.

257. **streamer of the northern morn**—the strange flashes of coloured light sometimes seen in the north, known as the *Aurora borealis*, of which words *northern morn* is a literal translation.

258. **moving isles of winter**—icebergs, the great masses formed either by the heaping together of the surface ice in the polar seas, or by the breaking off of the ends of glaciers when they reach the water. These are loosened at the beginning of spring and float southwards, forming a serious danger to navigation in the northern parts of the ocean. The breaking up of the pack ice, as it is called, is often attended by loud noise.

315. **Black stoled.** Tennyson here uses the word *stole* in its original sense (Greek στολή, Lat. *stola*) of a long flowing upper garment.

333. **greaves and cuisses.** *Cuisses* are armour for the thigh (Lat. *coxa*, Fr. *cuisse*). For *greaves* see note on V. 76.

336. **dais-throne.** *Dais* is a raised platform at one end of a hall, for a throne (as here) or other seat of honour.

350. *i.e.* since the birth of Christ, when the star guided the wise men who brought to His cradle gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

377. **Avilion.** The name is also spelt Avalon, *e.g.* by Tennyson in *The Palace of Art*, referring to this same legend:

> " Or mythic Uther's deeply wounded son
> In some fair space of sloping greens
> Lay dozing in the vale of Avalon,
> And watch'd by weeping queens."

Avalon is spoken of as near Glastonbury, a place which has a close connection with the legend of the Holy Grail, and this

would not be inconsistent with the slight geographical indications given in the poem.

381. **crowned with summer sea.** When one looks along a valley which gives a distant view of a small portion of sea, one always seems to be looking upwards.

385. **fluting a wild carol.** It was an ancient popular belief, though entirely unfounded, that swans sang just before their death. One of Tennyson's early lyrics is entitled *The Dying Swan.*

394. **the weird rhyme.** In the first of the Idylls, entitled *The Coming of Arthur*, Merlin the magician is asked about Arthur's destiny, and answers in 'riddling triplets' of which this is the last line. Arthur's birth was mysterious, and his end will be so.

402. Malory names the three Queens who carried away Arthur; but the romance gives no further explanation. The other references made to them by Tennyson, such as that in XXII. 256, are not based on anything in the romance.

XXIV

CRANMER'S SPEECH

The drama deals with the whole reign of Queen Mary Tudor. This extract is part of Archbishop Cranmer's speech before his martyrdom, when he was required to repeat in St. Mary's Church at Oxford his recantation of all the heresies against the Roman Church for which he had been condemned, and unexpectedly revoked it.

11. **what saith St. John.** The quotation is not in the actual words of the New Testament, which would not fit the verse. It is a paraphrase of 1 *John* II. 15; very similar words occur in *James* IV. 4.

15. Queen Mary insisted on giving to her husband, Philip of Spain, the title of king, an act which was extremely unpopular with her subjects.

16. **Williams** is Lord Williams of Thame, who as sheriff was charged with the duty of keeping order at Cranmer's execution.

30. **that sore saying.** This saying is found in all the three synoptic Gospels, almost in the same words. As in the previous quotation, Tennyson slightly alters the wording for the sake of the verse.

36. **The poor so many.** There was much distress in England throughout the middle of the sixteenth century, due to various

causes, of which two may be mentioned. The monasteries, which had furnished a large amount of charitable aid to the poor, had been dissolved late in the reign of Henry VIII. and no other machinery for relief had as yet been devised. And the great development of the English wool trade had led to much land being used for pasture instead of for corn growing, which diminished the amount of work to be given to labourers.

XXV

THE REVENGE

On the last day of August, 1591, an English fleet, under Lord Thomas Howard, was lying at Flores, in the Azores Islands, when a Spanish fleet of fifty-three sail approached. He had only six fighting ships, their crews much weakened by sickness, and a few small provision vessels; and naturally he made all haste to escape. His second in command, Sir Richard Grenville, either would not fly, or really could not get away in time without abandoning the sick men on shore, and he fought the whole Spanish fleet as described. The poem follows with minute accuracy all the details of the conflict, as reported by survivors. There is no more conspicuous instance in history, unless it be the Spartans at Thermopylæ, of that cool audacity in facing enormous odds, which has won for England, among other things, her empire in India.

It may be noticed that a great effect is produced by frequent changes in the metre. Thus the first four stanzas, while containing several minor variations, consist mostly of lines with four principal beats, like

'To the thúmb-screw and the stáke, for the glóry of the Lórd.'

The fifth stanza has six beats in the line, and the metre is swifter, having fewer syllables to the beat:

'The líttle Revénge ran ón sheer ínto the héart of the fóe.'

The sixth, seventh, and eighth revert mostly to the same metre as the first four. From the ninth to the eleventh we have the same *feet* as in the fifth, but the length of the lines is more irregular. Stanzas twelve and thirteen return to the first metre, and the last stanza returns to the second and swifter scheme, ending with the wonderful description of the rise of the storm, where the sound is so subtly suggestive of the reality:

'When a wind from the lands they had ruined awoke from sleep,'

A similar effect is produced by change of metre in the last stanza of the *Lotos-eaters* (No. VII). At line 149 the slow iambic

metre is abandoned, and the more rapid trochaic substituted, when the Lotos-eaters begin to shake off their dreamy passivity, to complain of the neglect with which the gods have treated them, and to form a resolve on their own account.

12. Englishmen taken prisoners by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century were handed over as heretics to the Inquisition, and were many of them burned alive, or otherwise tortured to death.

17. Sir Richard Grenville was one of the Devonshire worthies, many of whom were conspicuous among the adventurers of Elizabeth's reign. He lived near Bideford, then a considerable port, and it may fairly be assumed that his crew were mainly Bideford men.

24. **weather bow.** The weather side of a ship is the windward side, that from which the wind is blowing. The *weather bow* is therefore the bow on that side.

31. **Don**—a Spanish title of honour, like our *Mr.*

46. **galleon**—the Spanish word for a large galley or armed ship.

48. **larboard**—*i.e.* the left side of the ship ; *starboard*, the right. To prevent confusion of sound, *port* is now used for *larboard.*

112. A large number of merchant ships joined the Spanish fleet very soon after the capture of the "Revenge," and about two-thirds of the whole, including the "Revenge" herself, were sunk or wrecked in the storm that ensued.

XXVI

THE VOYAGE OF MAELDUNE

This poem is founded on an Irish story, translated in Joyce's *Old Celtic Romances*, in which book Tennyson read it. The earliest copy of the original dates from about 1100. It is difficult to tell what amount of historical basis there is for these romances, but it is at least possible that Maeldune was a real personage living about the year 700 A.D., and that he did undertake a voyage. It is obvious that a vessel blown off the coast of Ireland might easily be carried among the Hebrides, and visit many different islands.

Tennyson adopts the framework of the original story, and tells it in sections 1-2 and 10-11 ; but all the substance of the poem, except the idea of section 6 about the Isle of Fruits, is entirely out of his own imagination.

7. **on a Friday morn.** It is a common superstition with sailors that it is unlucky to begin a voyage on a Friday.

22. **flittermouse**—a bat. It is not clear whether this word was consciously imitated from *fledermaus*, which is the ordinary German name for a bat: but at any rate a mouse which flitters or flutters is a very natural description of a bat. "How infinitely superior," said Tennyson (*Life*, II. 203), "is the provincial word flitter-mouse to the orthodox bat."

39. **red passion-flower.** The passion flowers are all natives of tropical America. Only one of them has been acclimatised in England, the others are of many kinds and many colours, one among them being called *granadilla* (from a fancied resemblance between its fruit and that of a pomegranate); and hence the French have derived their name *grenadille* for the whole species.

dark-blue clematis. The name clematis was first applied in England to the periwinkle, and then transferred to the well-known family of climbing or trailing plants which now bears it. Some of them have a blue flower; another, of a pale greyish-green, is common in our hedgerows, and is popularly called 'Travellers' Joy' or 'Old Man's Beard.'

40. **myriad**—originally 'ten thousand,' and so used by the Greeks for any large number. Observe that Tennyson says 'a myriad *blossom*,' as though 'myriad' was a qualifying adjective like 'lavish' or 'abundant.' In some languages (Hungarian for example) the numerals are always used in this way, and carry the substantive in the singular, not in the plural. Thus a Hungarian will say 'six man,' not 'six men'; just as we sometimes say 'ten head of cattle' or 'five sail of the line.' 'Fathom' is used in this fashion a little lower down (l. 56).

42. **the lilies like glaciers winded down.** There was a band of white lilies down the hillside, between the bright-coloured flowers, like a glacier winding down between dark slopes. Something faintly resembling Tennyson's description may be seen here and there in the Alps, when the leaves of the rhododendrons, etc., on the slopes bounding a glacier have turned colour in autumn.

48. **The triumph of Finn.** Finn is a traditional Irish hero of the 3rd century. He is described as the commander of the military force of the Irish kings, and it seems probable that he was a real personage. The *Isle of Finn*, mentioned later in the poem, is of course Ireland.

107. **St. Brendan**—an Irish saint of the 6th century, who is reported to have sailed out westwards into the ocean, and even to have reached America.

118. **assoil'd** (through Old French from the Latin *absolvo*), to forgive, especially used, as here, of a priest formally pronouncing absolution.

XXVIII

ST. TELEMACHUS

Nothing seems to be known about St. Telemachus, except that he was an eastern monk, who came to Rome, and sacrificed himself, as described in the poem, to protest against the cruelties of the amphitheatre.

1. **some fiery peak.** The great eruption of Krakatau, on the Straits of Sunda between Sumatra and Java, cast volcanic dust so high into the air that it was carried all round the earth by its revolution, and caused very unusual sunset colours for some time. This happened in 1883, and doubtless suggested to Tennyson the setting for the story of St. Telemachus.

7. Nothing is stated about the exact place whence St. Telemachus came. Tennyson seems here to indicate Antioch, the greatest city of Syria, which had been famous for sun worship.

12. **anchorite**—from a Greek word meaning 'retired'; one who lives a life of solitary devotion. The more familiar *hermit* properly means an inhabitant of the desert (Gr. *ἔρημος*), and would obviously not be so exactly applicable to St. Telemachus.

15. **Vicisti Galilæe** (thou hast conquered, O Galilaean, *i.e.* Christ). Julian, nephew of Constantine the first Christian Emperor, restored the heathen worship during his short reign (361-363), and to a certain extent persecuted the Christians. It is said, though the story is not very well attested, that when dying he used the words here quoted, as if admitting that he had been wrong to oppose Christianity.

24. **The disk**—*i.e.* of the sun.

35. **The Christian city** — Rome, which as the seat of the Papacy was always spoken of as *par excellence* the Christian city. A large proportion of its inhabitants, however, clung to heathenism for more than two generations after Constantine.

45. **their huge Colosseum.** The great amphitheatre at Rome, where the fights of wild beasts and of gladiators went on. It is oval in shape, nearly 600 yards in circumference, and is said to have contained seats for 87,000 spectators.

52. **blood-red awning.** The Velarium, the great awning spread to protect the spectators in the Colosseum from the sun, was of a purple colour.

74. **The Baths.** In the great cities of the Roman Empire the Baths were vast establishments where people could spend the

whole day, and a variety of amusements were provided. They were naturally great centres of gossip.

the Forum was an open space, the business centre of the city, often surrounded by temples and other public buildings.

77. **Honorius.** This emperor finally put an end to the gladiatorial shows in 404 A.D. They had been forbidden before, and had been disused in many parts of the Empire. But Rome was the place where the gladiatorial shows were, from long habit, most cherished by the populace, and in the weakness of the imperial authority the law had not been enforced there.

XXIX

SONG FROM 'THE FORESTERS'

The Foresters is a romantic drama dealing with somewhat the same theme as Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, the disorder in England during the long absence of Richard Coeur de Lion, and the doings of Robin Hood and his outlaws. This song is sung by Robin Hood's men, in whose mouths the words of the first chorus are appropriate.

XXX

CROSSING THE BAR

It was Tennyson's express wish that this poem, though by no means his last, should be placed at the end of his collected works. It embodies very briefly, and in perfect lyrical form, the essence of his religious creed—a profound faith in God, blended with a firm belief that God's providence works by law, though the meaning of it may be hidden. The irresistible tide bears him out to sea, and darkness envelops the harbour bar, but beyond it he will emerge into light, and for the first time see his pilot face to face.

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Oenone

Paris was the son of Priam, King of Troy
It had been prophesied that he would
bring about the ruin of Troy. To avert this
he was exposed to the wild beasts on Mt.
Ida & brought up by shepherds. Here he
married Oenone, a nymph, the daughter
of river God, Peneus. There was a
dispute between Goddesses, Juno, Minerva
& Venus as to which was fairest, Paris was
made judge. Venus won by promising Paris
the fairest wife in Greece. This was Helen
wife of Menelaus, King of Sparta. Paris was
bidden to sail to Sparta & carry off Helen.
He returned with her to Troy & so caused
Trojan War between Greeks & Trojans.
He deserted Oenone, for Helen.

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